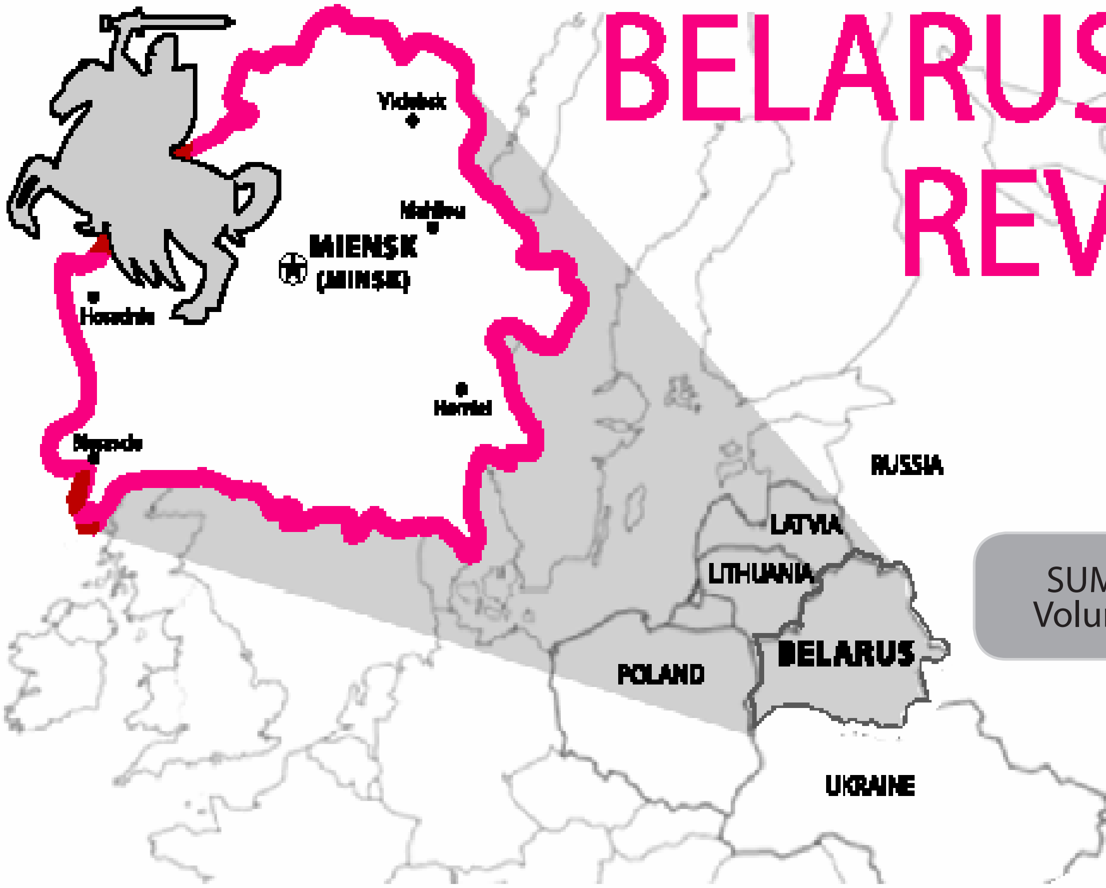


BELARUSIAN REVIEW

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IN THIS ISSUE

FOREWORD

GEORGE STANKEVICH AND KIRYL KASCIAN

This latest issue of BELARUSIAN REVIEW contains a tribute to Joe Arciuch, the founder and first editor-in-chief of BELARUSIAN REVIEW who passed away a year ago. His idea to establish BELARUSIAN REVIEW in order to inform the world about Belarus has developed into what is now the oldest continuously published journal in English language fully devoted to Belarus. We start this issue with an appreciation to his commitment expressed by people who knew him as a friend and a colleague - David H. Swartz, first U.S. ambassador to again-independent Belarus, and Ivonka J. Survilla, President of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in Exile.

On May 30, 2014 Belarus lost Hienadź Buraŭkin, a prominent poet, journalist, and diplomat who in 1990-1994 was the country's Ambassador to the United Nations. The personality of Hienadź Buraŭkin is multifaceted but equally important for Belarus in each activity he was involved in. Author of beautiful poems and subsequently song lyrics, he was a talented chief of the Belarusian television and subsequently diplomat. As Buraŭkin confessed in his article "A nation can fullfil itself only as a nation state" written for the 2013 Summer issue of Belarusian Review; he considered one of his best diplomatic achievements the fact that the state began to communicate seriously with the Belarusian diaspora. It is disgrace of the current government and public bodies in Minsk who all but ignored the departure of this prominent figure of the Belarusian culture and statehood. Let us just hope that within time, the Belarusian state will duly acknowledge the role of Hienadź Buraŭkin in the nation's recent history. In this issue we also pay a tribute to this personality who made a lot to bring Belarus and its diaspora closer to each other.

For already half a year the region where Belarus is situated is being dominated by events in and around Ukraine. This situation influences both bilateral relations and multilateral platforms in the region. Situation of Belarus with this regard remains quite unique. On the one hand, after the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula Belarus remained the only Eastern Partnership country not involved into any interethnic or territorial conflict. On the other hand, among six Eastern Partnership countries Belarus enjoys the lowest level of engagement with EU and simultaneously the highest degree of integration with Russia, particularly after the signing of the Treaty on Eurasian Economic Union on May 29, 2014. This status quo is not a matter of the discussion in this text, but what matters is how its framework is presented. There are various opinion polls produced in Belarus and other Eastern Partnership countries which address the issue of each country's geopolitical choice. Formulated as an "either-or" choice between "real" integration with Russia and "virtual" membership in the EU, they deem to illustrate geopolitical choices of each country's population. However, in the reality such polls are methodologically incorrect as they put Belarus as an object of a "war" between the EU and Russia. Moreover, they provide commentators with certain pattern of thought that tends to treat Belarus merely as an object of international politics but not its subject. Finally, it is not always clear whether the respondents understand question as the sociologists do, and whether the message of the respondents bears the same logic as those of the sociologists. To put it short, there is an example: a person may opt for Russia in such opinion poll because he/she is in favour of the USSR restoration, or because he/she believes that within the Russian-led EEU it would be easier for Belarus to negotiate free trade regime with the EU. Thus, the answer is the same but reasons and subsequent actions are qualitatively different. Thus, how In this issue we address the Belarus-related themes within the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the Eastern Partnership framework and signing of the Eurasian Economic Union in the expert interviews and texts by Stefan Wolff, Hanna Vasilevich, David Erkomaishvili, Valery Kavaleuski and David Marples (this time co-authored).

The issue also covers the 2014 European Parliament elections in Poland with regard to the Poland's Belarusian minority described by Jaŭhien Miranovič, characteristics and peculiarities of bilingualism in Belarus discussed by Curt Woolhiser, as well as the second part of the text "Nazi crimes in the USSR as described in the WWII letters, diaries and memoirs of natives of Belarus" by Leonid Smilovitsky which has particular relevance on the eve of the 70th anniversary of Belarus' liberation from the Nazis on July 3, 2014.

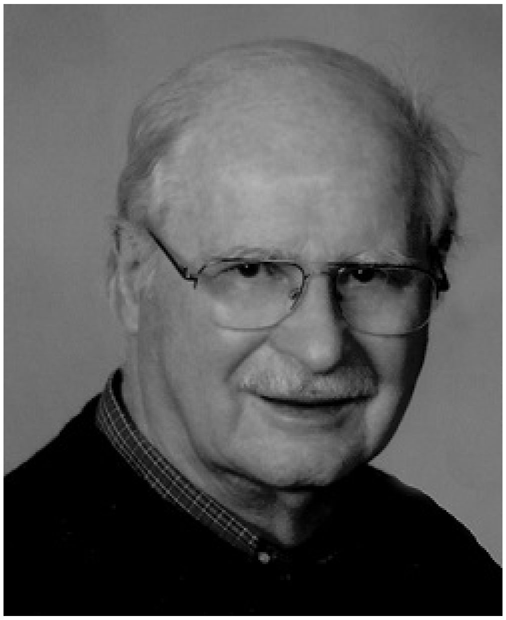
In addition, the issue contains the review of the documentary „Dangerous Acts Starring the Unstable Elements of Belarus" (2013) about last presidential elections in Belarus from the perspective of Belarus Free Theater by Larisa Doroshenko, reflections on Belarusian nation and freedom in today's globalized world by Piotra Murzionak, as well as the introduction of the book „Voice of Freedom From Behind Bars", the anthology of works by Belarusian political prisoners, by Valancina Tryhubovič, followed by an excerpt from Ihar Alinievič's work "On the Way to Magadan".

Last but not least, we would like to announce changes in our editorial board. From this issue on George Stankevich acts as editor-at-large, whereas Kiryl Kascian takes on responsibilities of the editor-in-chief of the BELARUSIAN REVIEW.

BECOME AN AUTHOR

We are looking forward to receive contributions from new authors, particularly from young scholars and analysts dealing with issues related to Belarus. If you would like to submit your text to Belarusian Review please, email it to the address: thepointjournal@gmail.com or belarusianreview@hotmail.com. All the materials must be sent in a text format (.doc, .docx, .rtf). bear author's name and should not exceed 7,000 words. Please note that Belarusian Review is an entirely non-commercial project operating on a voluntary basis.

EDITORIAL



IN MEMORIAM

JOE ARCIUCH

(February 11, 1922 - June 16, 2013)
Founder and first editor-in-chief of
BELARUSIAN REVIEW

JOE ARCIUCH: AN APPRECIATION

DAVID H. SWARTZ

Together with many, many others I was saddened by the passing of my good friend, Joe Arciuch. I knew Joe very well and cooperated with him on numerous projects, beginning in early 1992 when I was nominated as U.S. ambassador to Belarus. Joe was kind, patient, tenacious, and very goal-focused. As a tribute to him and his life as a true Belarusian patriot, I would like to share with readers of *Belarusian Review* a number of projects Joe and I worked on together. They underscore the significance and consistency of Joe's commitment to Belarusian affairs.

We first met not in person but by phone, as Joe resided in California. Shortly after my nomination I called Joe from the State Department to introduce myself and to seek his willingness to assist in preparing for my assignment to his native land. I had heard of Joe from others at State who knew of him through the journal he created, *Belarusian Review*. Joe enthusiastically agreed, and we began the process then and there. We spoke many more times before I departed for Minsk in March, 1992. His deep knowledge of Belarusian history, culture, language, society and, especially, of contemporary events and personalities proved invaluable. I smile when I recall our discussion in that first phone call regarding usage of Belarusian as opposed to Belarusan. The main thing, he said, was to never, ever use the term Byelorussian, the anglicization of the Russian language rendering for someone from Belarus (Byelorussiya in Russian). (In all the years since then, I have yet to hear a Russian use the correct word.) He also brought me into contact with numerous leaders of the Belarusian Diaspora in North America. As many of them resided on the U.S. eastern seaboard I was able to meet some of them. One, Russell Zavistovich, lived in suburban Maryland and attended my swearing-in ceremony.

Once settled in Belarus, I of course encountered a wide array of officials and ordinary citizens. I remember discussing many of them with Joe on my occasional trips back to Washington where I felt it was more appropriate to speak with him by phone than from Minsk. Joe was an invaluable sounding board, for example his insights into a number of persons in the Belarus foreign affairs establishment.

The one official about whom Joe was unequivocally positive was Stanislau Shuskevich, who through a curious set of circumstances had become Belarus' head of state with the collapse of the U.S.S.R. Another whom we discussed was Anatoliy Mikhaylov, Shushkevich's senior political adviser. At that time – spring, 1992 – Prof. Mikhaylov was also in the process of creating a new university, to be named the European Humanities University or EHU. I met with one or both of them on almost a daily basis.

In early 1994, upon conclusion of my tour of duty in Belarus, I returned to the State Department. Later that year I happened to be in Los Angeles on State Department business and of course contacted Joe. We met face-to-face for the first time, at a restaurant in Santa Monica. We talked about many things, most especially the implications for Belarus under its new president, A. Lukashenka.

Even in those early days of Lukashenka's term in office, it was abundantly clear that the road to a truly independent, democratic Belarus would be bumpy. (It still is.) We discussed, specifically, the efficacy of creating a political advisory group of appropriate individuals from the Diaspora. The idea was that the group would meet periodically with senior State Department policymakers responsible for Belarus. Joe was enthusiastic, as always, and he immediately embarked on his initiative. He participated in several of these meetings, and they indeed proved valuable in bringing Diaspora input to bear on Washington policy deliberations and decision-making.

In late 1995 I retired from the Foreign Service. Shortly thereafter, Anatoliy Mikhaylov contacted me with the proposal to form a U.S.-based NGO for the purpose of promoting higher education, and thus societal, reform in Belarus through his now-established university. Joe and I had serious, lengthy discussions about this matter. Decisive for us was EHU's official mission, the essential element of which stated: ". . . to contribute to the formation of a new generation of

professionals . . . capable of leading Belarus away from the heritage of totalitarianism toward an open society, based on the values of European civilization." After carefully considering the pros and cons, including the rapidly evolving authoritarianism under Belarus' new political leadership (which even fostered creation of a national ideology), we decided to establish the European Humanities University Foundation (EHUF), with us and several others comprising the board of directors. Joe, I, and the other directors met via conference calls; at least once a year we held a board meeting with Prof. Mikhaylov attending by phone from Belarus.

In 2004, the Lukashenka regime forced EHU to shut down in Minsk. The university went into exile – in Lithuania – and reopened in 2005 with a somewhat different mandate, one less focused specifically on Belarus. As a result, EHUF terminated its existence. In all these matters, Joe's expertise and advice were central to the evolution of events.

In 2006, Joe helped start a new venture: the Center for Belarusian Studies (CBS), located at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas. Our mission is simple and straightforward: "Facilitating the revival of the Belarus nation through higher education." In a real sense, this represents what EHU set out to do back in 1992.

In seeking an executive director for the center, Joe proposed Professor Maria Paula Survilla. Professor Survilla teaches musicology and ethnomusicology at Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa. She is a second-generation Belarusian and, inter alia, she spent a year in Belarus under a Fulbright grant. Even though we were in Belarus contemporaneously, Professor Survilla and I had not met there. I am extremely grateful to Joe for making this connection. Under her leadership, CBS has brought visiting scholars to the Center, held seminars, established an archive (including a complete set of *Belarusian Review* donated by Joe), created a publishing venture, established an intensive Belarusian language and area studies program in Poland, and engaged in policy advocacy at various government entities in Washington. In all this, notwithstanding evolving health issues Joe continued his very active involvement through service as a member of CBS' advisory board. I last saw Joe in 2009 when he attended the annual CBS board meeting in Kansas.

Joe was a colleague and a friend. He clearly and thoughtfully saw Belarus' restored independence as a precious *carpe diem* opportunity. He contributed substantive, creative ideas to every policy issue pertaining to Belarus, many of them shared in editorial comment and lead articles in *Belarusian Review.* His views were frequently determinative, as with creation of EHUF in the face of renewed oppression in Belarus. The policy advocacy group he founded performs a vital function in interacting with official Washington. Our Center for Belarusian Studies is another testament to Joe's focus and determination. I treasure the memories of our association in the mutual cause of Belarus.

Author: David H. Swartz - the first U.S. ambassador to again-independent Belarus, where he served from 1992 until 1994.

A MISSED FRIEND

IVONKA J. SURVILLA

There is no greater misfortune in life than losing a friend. In the case of Joe Arciuch, the Belarusian community has lost not only a friend, but a tireless advocate for the independence and future of their beloved "lost homeland" – Belarus.

Millions of Belarusians have left their homeland not because they thought they would be happier elsewhere… Most left because their lives were threatened by foreign aggressors, or because they simply could not survive in their oppressed land.

That was the case of Joe's family, of my family, of the families of all of my Belarusian friends. Many are talented men and women, who contributed greatly to the well being of the countries which became their second homes. In the United States of America, Joe had a brilliant career, was respected and loved by all. When he retired, he decided to dedicate the rest of his life to help Belarus become the free, democratic and wealthy land we all dream of.

It was a few years before independence, and the world knew nothing about Belarus. Eager to preserve their language and their culture, the diaspora had dedicated all their efforts to write and publish in Belarusian, which was becoming an extinct language in their Soviet homeland. As for the rest of the world, we somehow thought that it would be easier to inform them about Belarus through our culture, our songs and our dances.

Joe Arciuch thought otherwise. He founded in 1988 the Belarusian Review, the first English language quarterly in the U.S. dedicated to Belarus. He understood how important it was to inform the English speaking decision-makers about Belarusian affairs, and he did it splendidly. Both the content and the format of Belarusian Review were perfect. He made sure the most important issues were emphasized by writing to government and individual readers.

The diaspora realized what an asset Joe was. He was elected to the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, and he soon became the Deputy Secretary for External Affairs of the Government in Exile. His wisdom and his know-how were invaluable, and our conference calls with him are still very much missed.

On this first anniversary of Joe's passing, I would like to express my gratitude for his dedication to our common goal – a free, independent and Belarusian Belarus. I wish he were here at this difficult time, when Russia has begun to reassemble its lost colonies and Belarus needs every help to preserve the independence, however imperfect at this time, of its people.

Author: Ivonka J. Survilla - President, Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic in Exile.

IN MEMORIAM



HIENADŹ BURAŬKIN
(August 28, 1936 - May 30, 2014)

Belarusian poet, journalist, and diplomat, author of numerous books of poetry. In 1978-1990 he was chief of the State Television and Radio Company of Belarus. From 1990 to 1994 he was Ambassador of Belarus to the United Nations.

MAN WHO HELPED TO REALLY UNDERSTAND BELARUS

KIRYL KASCIAN

That much of grey fog
was released on our past,
And you'll find
without deceit
neither fairy tale,
nor fact.
Hienadź Buraŭkin

Thus far, much has been written about Hienadź Buraŭkin by those who knew him closely. I don't belong to them, yet I was fortunate enough to know this man personally. We became acquainted in April 2013 in Vilnia during a Conference of Belarusians of the Baltic region and diaspora; it also coincided with the anniversary of the chairman of the Association of Belarusian Culture in Lithuania, Chviedar Niuńka. Thereafter I was twice in Buraŭkin's Minsk apartment, recording interviews with him. These discussions lasted several hours each, and embraced various matters; however, regardless of the topics, I was facing a Man and Citizen with a vast amount of wisdom and dignity. Such a captivating personality, made me want to listen and interrogate him again and again.

However, for me personally Hienadź Buraŭkin is not only a wonderful poet; he is also a man who through his words helped to really understand Belarus, and simultaneously broke clichés and stereotypes about our country, about reasons for our independence and foundations of our identity. After reading a considerable number of foreign analysts and commentators (as well as certain Belarusian ones), dealing with Belarus-related topics, one cannot help noticing that these stereotypes are numerous. For instance, it is argued that Belarusians are denationalized, having a heavily Russified nation with an undefined identity. Their country supposedly gained its independence by "accident" and the situation in Belarus on the eve of independence was not due to Moscow's concentrated efforts to root out the national Belarusian element, but due to the readiness of Belarusian elites to accept the role of a testing ground for Russification under the guise of Soviet internationalism.

Buraŭkin explained the situation of Belarusian political and intellectual elites, as he had personal insight and wonderful knowledge of this system from the inside. He also fortified his relations with clear examples of concrete personal activity, beginning with the highest leadership of the then Belarusian SSR – Kiryl Mazuraŭ, Piotr Mašeraŭ, and Cichan Kisialioŭ.

His narratives reflected the entire reality of that time. It was neither white, nor black, but multi-colored and multi--leveled. Through his narratives, Buraŭkin painted portraits of persons responsible for making important decisions, and also showed both rules of the game, and limits of what Belarusian elites were allowed to achieve. Each example only reinforced these images and provided understanding of the multi-faceted nature of these processes that took place in Soviet Belarus. Buraŭkin was capable to accessibly explain the entire mechanism of this or that process, starting with its causes and ending with its consequences. This is why Buraŭkin's narratives about political and social processes in the late B.S.S.R were destroying those numerous linear stereotypes and clichés, written by various analysts and commentators in their works and publications on Belarus.

Hienadź Buraŭkin left behind numerous memoirs concerning Belarus when it was a part of the USSR, the subsequent declaration of independence and made the first steps of independent diplomacy. His political talent, as Alena Makouskaja underscored, "contributed to maintaining trust; and Belarusians of the Diaspora discovered for themselves also another, non-Soviet, national Belarusian Belarus." Buraŭkin himself considered these points of reference as one of his best diplomatic achievements. However, at the same time, as accurately observed by Uladzimir Niakliajeŭ, Hienadź Buraŭkin was a man with not only poetic but also with a political thinking and it pained him to feel unneeded as a state figure. Indeed, he could have done much for Belarus on any, most responsible post.

That wisdom and accuracy in Buraŭkin's assessments of events in Belarusian history, of which he was a contemporary and co-creator, requires the most attentive attitude to his creative legacy on part of all those who really want to understand Belarus, as it is in an objective reality.

FEATURES

STEFAN WOLFF: THE EU AND RUSSIAN GEOPOLITICAL OPTIONS ARE BECOMING MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

Following the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula Belarus has become the only Eastern Partnership country free from any interethnic or territorial conflict. At the same time, among all six EaP countries Belarus could be characterized by the lowest level of engagement with EU and by the highest degree of integration with Russia. Belarusian Review *asked professor* Stefan Wolff *to assess perspectives of the post-Crimean developments in the region.*

Belarusian Review: *How could the situation in Ukraine change the balance of powers and security in the region?*

Stefan Wolff: The situation has already changed a lot. We have a very different appreciation now of what the current Russian government of Vladimir Putin is prepared to do in order to assert its own interests. The annexation of Crimea by Russia is an unprecedented event in post-Cold War history. Nothing like that has happened in the past 25 years and arguably even long before that. We now have to reassess our relationship with Russia but also have to reassess it in terms of how assertive Russia is in its own neighborhood. Beyond that, the destabilization of Ukraine and the apparent weakness of the Ukrainian state institutions are going to be facts of life that will continue in many ways for a number of years. That will certainly shift the balance of power very much in favor of Russia and pro-Russian forces in Ukraine. If we were to take a really hard look at Moldova, we would probably see a similar situation there, even though it has not yet come.

BR: *How could the EU's inability to swiftly react to developments in Ukraine affect the willingness of the EaP countries to deepen their rapprochement with the EU via the EaP platform?*

SW: There are two different issues here. One is the reaction or lack thereof of the European Union. The Union was very much caught by surprise by how quickly the situation developed on the ground in Ukraine, particularly in February and March. Second, there is the issue of how the EU prioritizes its relationships with the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Russia. It has become very obvious that a number of the EU Member States, including Germany, to some extent pursue "Russia-first" policies. All the moves that the EU is making in the Eastern Neighborhood are measured in terms of how it affects its relationship with Russia. The other issue you mentioned is the question of how the citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries will react to that. But I do not think that it is really a tipping point in the overall long-term trends in terms of how the EU is being perceived or how people relate to the prospect of closer European integration. The "Eurobarometer" polls over the past several years have suggested that populations are generally quite deeply divided over the issue. Obviously, all polls have a degree of uncertainty and we do not always really know whether the people understood the question properly. What is very clear if one looks at election results across countries of the Eastern Partnership is that there is a sizeable part of the population that is very much interested in closer integration with the EU, whether this is linked with the freedom of travel, economic relations, student exchanges, etc. At the same time, there is an equally sizeable and probably in some countries larger part of the population that really has the same feelings towards Russia. The problem we are facing now is based on the fact that these two options are becoming more and more mutually exclusive. It seems very difficult now, certainly at the moment, to be pro-Moscow or pro-Brussels and still be able to accept that there are other visions, or to have a general cultural orientation towards the East and still be able to see the benefits and the attraction of the closer integration with the EU. The main challenge now is to somehow manage this increasing division and polarization in a way that eventually people who can speak Russian, be ethnic Russians living in Ukraine and still feel positive about the European Union, or the other way round – that people who are ethnically Ukrainians, speak Ukrainian, have a strong pro-European orientation still can feel positively about relations with ethnic Russians in Ukraine, with Russian-speakers in Ukraine and about relations between Kyiv and Moscow.

BR: *Choosing between two evils, is it better to have an undemocratic Belarus or a torn-apart Ukraine?*

SW: I think in the long-run neither option is particularly attractive. Generally speaking, peace, security and stability in the region and more broadly in Europe have not been threatened by a non-democratic Belarus in the same way in which they might be threatened by Ukraine that not just lost Crimea but where potentially one has major areas of instability, comparable in nature but many times the size of what one has in Moldova and Transnistria. For example, if the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, or let alone parts of southern Ukraine, were turned into frozen conflict zones or de-facto states as we have had in Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia or Nagorno-Karabakh for more than 20 years now, I think that would be a much graver threat to peace and security in Europe than a continuation of a non-democratic regime in Belarus. But having said that, I do not think that further moves towards democratization in Belarus are necessarily connected to developments in Ukraine, Moldova or the South Caucasus. The choise before us now is not to support Lukashenka or the government in Ukraine – they are not unconnected but they also present not very clear trade-offs.

Interview conducted by Kiryl Kascian

Note: Dr. Stefan Wolff is professor of International Security at the University of Birmingham, author of seventeen books and over twenty journal articles and book chapters; his expertise encompasses the prevention, management and settlement of ethnic and religious conflicts.

BELARUS-EU DIALOGUE: TOWARDS MORE PRAGMATISM?

HANNA VASILEVICH

The announcement to start visa liberalization dialogue with the EU was the most important result of the 2013 Eastern Partnership Summit for Belarus. This initiative could be seen as a pragmatic attempt to rebalance Belarus' alliance choices under a narrowing scope of opportunities.

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative, a common foreign policy launched in 2009, became the first multilateral framework for the EU to approach its post-Soviet neighbours. Both prior to the EaP implementation and up until today the policies of the EU towards Belarus can be characterized as "*comply with conditionality set by us to expect any progress in the relations*", whereas the message of the Belarusian authorities in response could be described as "*focus on real spheres of cooperation and accept us as we are*".

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP: FIVE YEARS WITHOUT PROGRESS

Belarus has long been an outsider with regard to deepening bilateral relations with the EU, since already in 1997 "*the deteriorating political situation in Belarus*" caused the Council of the European Union not to conclude a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Minsk.[1] Brussels explains the limited scope of its cooperation with Belarus by "*the policies pursued by President Alexander Lukashenka's regime [which] prevent the EU from offering a full participation in the neighbourhood policy*".[2] Thus the inclusion of Belarus into the EaP framework can be seen as a breakthrough, as it opened the way for the institutionalization of relations, at least at multilateral level.

The EU made all further endeavours to develop relations conditional upon Belarus's progress towards the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights. At the same time, presidential elections of December 2010 in Belarus and the repressive backlash that followed marked the lowest point in bilateral relations. Joint disagreement deepened after the Belarusian delegation left the second EaP summit in Warsaw in September 2011. In the meantime, the EU had re-imposed restrictive measures –a visa ban and assets freeze–on over 160 members of the leadership. From March 2012 onwards, the European Commission concentrated its efforts on a European Dialogue on Modernisation (EDM) with Belarusian society addressed towards the country's NGOs and political opposition –thereby excluding, as previously, regime representatives from this platform.

Thus, notwithstanding the implementation of the EaP, Belarus-EU relations are characterized by a limited dialogue dominated by mutual mistrust and political antagonism. On the one hand, the EU recognized the importance of Belarus as a partner but sticks with the principle of conditionality. On the other hand, Belarus's authorities tried to channel their vision of the EaP as a multi-speed and "result-oriented cooperation framework [...] that should serve *pragmatic interests of all partner states and the Wider Europe in general by fostering sustainable development, economic and social modernisation in this part of the continent*".[3] These approaches imply rather inflexible positions of both sides which merely keep the status quo in Belarus-EU relations that had existed prior to the EaP launch. Such a situation still provides a window of opportunities for the development of Belarus-EU cooperation in certain areas however.

These visions imply rather inflexible positions of both sides which merely keep the status quo in Belarus-EU relations that had existed prior to the EaP launch. Such a deadlock still provides a window of opportunities for the development of Belarus-EU cooperation in certain areas however.

IN THE SHADOW OF UKRAINE

The announcement by Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makei to start dialogue with the EU on visa liberalization was the most important result of the last EaP Summit for Belarus. First, regardless of the reasons behind the authorities' reluctance to answer Brussels' invitation to negotiate earlier, the issue of visa liberalization is merely a technical, not a political issue. It requires expressed shared interest and thus depends on the political will of both parties. However, facilitating border--crossing between Belarus and the EU does open a window of opportunities. Second, for a number of years Belarus has been a world champion with regard to the number of Schengen visas issued per person.[4] At the same time, Belarusians pay for Schengen visas more (60 €) than citizens of other EaP countries or Russia (35 €). Third, a reciprocally more liberal visa regime for incoming guests could objectively boost Belarus's tourism industry. Hence, none of these coincides with the political controversies in Belarus-EU relations; they comply with the goals of the EaP on encouraging people-to-people contacts and reflect the pragmatic vision of the Belarusian authorities towards the EaP framework.

The general evaluation of the EaP progress "*resembles a two-tier league where the "champions" who were about to initiate or sign the association agreement are delegated to the higher tier, while those lacking it – to the second tier*".[5] This complies with the "more for more" principle announced in May 2011 by the revised version of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Belarus, the only EaP country not specifically mentioned in the Programme of the 2013 Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council, was turned into an outsider in the second-tier. With the EU focusing on the first-tier states, notably Ukraine, Belarus has received only marginal attention in Vilnius. Therefore, against this political background, U.Makei's "constructive" message had little chance to attract much public attention.

PRAGMATISM REVISITED

In fact, Belarus has been an outcast of the EaP all along.

At the same time, the authorities steadily repeated their country's readiness to collaborate with the EU within the framework of the EaP. Going further, Uladzimir Makei recently urged the EU to abandon conditionality and "*its one-size-fits--all approach to the partner states*".[6]

This statement illustrates Belarus's diplomatic attempts at fostering pragmatism in relations with the EU. First, against the background of the Ukrainian crisis the Belarusian authorities attempt to stress the EU's interest in "*a sovereign, independent, and whole Belarus that makes its contribution to maintaining stability and security in Europe*".[7] Second, U.Makei emphasized the unattractiveness for Belarus of a rapprochement under the aegis of the EaP, in comparison with what other partners can obtain via Association Agreements. Third, the Belarusian authorities try to emphasize the need for the EU to develop a long-term cooperation strategy, breaking from the current policy which "*can be described as ad hoc actions that were at best planned for the short term*".[8] Fourth, they stress the need for a more pragmatic approach by mentioning the economic importance of the EU as Belarus' second-largest trading partner, after Russia.

The Belarusian authorities obviously repeat their earlier rhetoric, attempting to "de-politicize" the country's bilateral relations with the EU, which they see as the most rational way to break the current deadlock –thus ignoring the EU's conditioning of normalisation of relations to the prior release and rehabilitation of political prisoners. What is new, however, is that Minsk invoke the rhetoric of regional stability, waiving the prospect of a (Russian) threat against Belarus's sovereignty and territorial integrity to force the EU to swap a values-based approach for a more pragmatic *Realpolitik*-based one.

The 2014 ice hockey World Championship held in Minsk in May 2014 seems very important for that purpose. On the one hand, the authorities will obviously try to make the event a smaller copy of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. On the other hand, an apparent mercantilism of the Belarusian authorities, embodied in a temporary visa-free regime during the competition, appears as a good will gesture meant to open a window of opportunities, which could bear fruits in a mid-term perspective. In fact, the Championship provides Belarus with a possibility to present its national culture to foreigners under a better light. Largely unknown, or perceived as a part of the so-called *Russosphere*, it is national culture that serves as the main identity marker of Belarusian distinctiveness. Hosting this event could provide grounds for foreigners to revise their perception of Belarus, which is now largely conditioned by the dichotomy and antagonism between the regime and political opposition/civic society, a scheme which leaves no room for the Belarusian *people* as such. Either way, this event could help rediscover the least known European country and thus eliminate at least part of the stereotypes about it.

All EaP developments prior to the Summit in Vilnius and its outcomes with regard to Belarus illustrate the stability of the current status quo in the Belarus-EU relations. However, against the background of the developments in Ukraine and short-sightedness of the ultimatum urging the EaP countries to make an "either-or" choice between the EU and Russia, the recent shifts in Belarusian foreign policy rhetoric towards more mercantilism and good marketing of the country as a tourist and investment destination signal the regime's attempts to rebalance Belarus' alliance choices within the available scope of opportunities. The future will tell whether the regime is ready to make concessions for that purpose.

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The European Union believes that today everyone should want to join this organization, while they at the European Union will choose who to build up relations with and how. We do not want the EU membership for the time being, because we see that the EU has a lot of issues of its own. God help them sort out all these issues. If we saw that we would really benefit from it, we might want to join, but only after analyzing all pros and cons and possible consequences.

Uladzimir Makei
April 28, 2014, BelTA

THE RETURN OF THE UNION TREATY

DAVID ERKOMAISHVILI

Post-Soviet integrative projects have been receiving less attention, especially those concerning economy and security, against the backdrop of the events in Ukraine. For the period that the mass protests, which commenced following the refusal of the Yanukovych government to complete the association deal with the EU, turned into the civil confrontation and disintegration of Ukraine, post-Soviet cooperation has been rapidly changing. The signing of the Treaty on Eurasian Economic Union on May 29 is substantial in this respect.

The signing of the treaty has formally announced the launch of the next generation of the post-Soviet integration policies. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, various projects have been taking place and succeeding each other. First wave which immediately followed the dissolution began with the set up of the CIS and its various frameworks (which later became independent organisations) as well as the initial departure from the common infrastructure and political arrangements. Succeeding it was the second wave with split-up of the CIS into institutionalised and issue-specific alignments (CSTO, EurAsEC). The latest development suggest that there is a new tendency - the beginning of splicing of various projects under one domain with a cohesive framework.

The project of the Eurasian Economic Union is the first attempt of such scale aimed at consolidation of what has proved to be a number of smaller and in many cases dysfunctional alignments. CSTO during the events in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, where Kyrgyz authorities appealed to the organisation to intervene just to witness their appeal to be turned down by the other members of the organisation which focused on managing delicate Central Asian regional balance of interest; Union State of Russia and Belarus which steadily was phased out politically in favour of trilateral cooperation with Kazakhstan. In reality this also means that the temporary stage of formation of organisations which framed cooperation in various regional fields, such as security, economic cooperation, migration or trade is now over. This also denotes the fact that the only state of the post-Soviet space, other than Russia, which is capable of building alignments, Ukraine, has lost this opportunity. Under such circumstances it is Moscow, the only state left with such alliance-building capabilities in the region, who will define the integrative agenda of the post-Soviet space for several years to come. Russia has made its choice in favour of efficiency and unification under one framework which is reflected in a steady increase of the role of the project of Eurasian Union vis-a-vis all other.

The Eurasian integration also adds what has been missing since the collapse of the Soviet Union and was absent in all previous projects - the ideology. The project goes well beyond economic integration. The idea of Eurasianism which has been advanced by Kazakhstan since mid-1990s evolved well since then. The signing of the treaty is first and foremost the success of the Kazakh leader. While Russia supports this notion, the two sides differ on the details. To some degree or the other the idea of Central Asian union and cooperative organisations such as the Customs Union of the CIS and, later on, the predecessor of the Eurasian Union - EurAsEC - all have enjoyed the support or were directly proposed by Nursultan Nazarbayev. With the deteriorating relations between Russia and the United States, as well as with several states of the EU, the project is arriving just on time.

The symbolism of the signing of the treaty is hard to underestimate and it goes far beyond its title. It is not simply another 'EU' (as it stands for Eurasian Union). The treaty was signed in Astana to highlight the role of Kazakhstan and its commitment to Eurasian ideology under current leadership. Speaking of the 'EU' this is an idea designed with the post-Soviet space in mind. It is an alternative to the EU and a signal for states with Western-focused foreign policy like Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. It is also unlike the EU, highlighting the unique stance of the post-Soviet states which have been side-lined from the major take in global affairs for the last two decades. It is not Asia as much as it is not Europe which accents the intention to create another political centre capable of playing a role in global affairs and capable of becoming a magnet for states searching for the alternative to the West. However, it is important to emphasise that the project of Eurasian Union is not as cohesive as it may seem. All three founding members have different priorities and at times conflicting interests.

From the utilitarian perspective, the signing of the treaty, if implemented as planned, creates a condition where for the first time in post-Soviet integration's history a framework is by default attached to the global economic standards. This is done via the utilisation of WTO standards. The aim is to tackle one of the major obstacles in previous experiences with integrative frameworks in the post-Soviet space, their regional nature. This aim is well balanced with the idea of creating a global centre, not regional, despite the fact that its major focus is the post-Soviet space.

At the same time much will depend on the ability of the three states to solve current problems in their relations. Those are typical for the post-Soviet cooperation and have not been properly addressed for the last two decades. It includes the ability to create supranational body which will function so in reality rather than on paper only. So far, the leaders and members of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council - the highest body of the forming union - have been officials from the three member governments. This questions the idea of supranationality and is reminiscent of other post-Soviet frameworks where the ability to successfully delegate authority from the national level to the supranational one has been the major obstacle for their development. Creating a truly independent body, not faking it, is the issue to tackle. Both problems have been having one root and have been tied to the issue of sovereignty which each of the states cemented in the post-1991 status quo. Third, but no less important, is whether Russia will be able to deal with other members of the Eurasian Union as equals, not as subordinates.

THOUGHTS & OBSERVATIONS

JAŬHIEN MIRANOVIČ: VOTES OF ALL BELARUSIANS IN POLAND ARE NOT ENOUGH TO ELECT A MEP

The results of the elections to the European Parliament that took place in Poland on May 25, 2014 were fairly predictable in the context of Podlachia. In the city of Białystok (Belarusian: Bielastok*), as well as in the counties of Białystok, Bielsk Podlaski (Belarusian:* BieĺskPadliašski*) and Sokółka (Belarusian:* Sakolka*), the Law and Justice Party enjoyed the largest electoral support. Voters in the county of Hajnówka (Belarusian:* Hajnaŭka*) "traditionally" favored the Democratic Left Alliance in coalition with the Labor Union. Professor Jaŭhien Miranovič comments on results of elections from the perspective of Belarusians in Poland.*

Belarusian Review: *Do elections to the European Parliament have any special significance for the Belarusian minority in Poland?*

Jaŭhien Miranovič: They certainly do, as for all ethnic minorities in Europe. From the viewpoint of less numerous communities the EU as an institution positively influences their political positions. All peoples united by this organization represent in a certain sense national minorities; they are constantly seeking compromises and making some concessions. This is a great school of democracy for rural nations of Eastern Europe. In the case of the Belarusian minority it is extremely important that Poland is represented in the European Parliament by those Polish parties that favor further integration. All minorities in our country prefer a prosperous and democratic Poland in the prosperous and democratic Europe to a poor country with an authoritarian government and a society dominated by nationalistic feelings.

BR: *In addition to the ethnic factor, how could you explain somewhat different electoral priorities in Hajnówka and the remainder of Podlachian region, inhabited by the Belarusian minority?*

JM: The older generation of Poland's Belarusians has very positive memories of the Polish People's Republic. This is why they always prefer the Democratic Left Alliance, the inheritor of the Polish United Workers' Party (i.e. Communist party) which was in power until 1989. In recent years many Belarusians also voted for the Civic Platform, as a party more moderate and liberal than the Law and Justice. However, in practice these organizations do not differ much. This is why most people declared that there is nobody worth voting for, and did not participate in elections. In the western part of the Voivodeship, dominated by strong Catholic traditions, those who decided to take part in elections voted for the Law and Justice Party.

BR: *Did any representative of the Belarusian minority have a chance to become a MEP? In your opinion, why this did not happen?*

JM: A representative of the Belarusian minority has a chance to become a Member of the Polish parliament only when he/she acts as a member of an influential Polish nationwide party, and does not show his/her Belarusianness. In the Białystok region the remaining Belarusians are not numerous enough for gaining a parliamentary mandate. In the last few years the assimilation process has been proceeding at a lightning pace; this presents no perspective for an electoral success of any Belarusian movement. The support of over 50,000 voters is required to get elected to the European Parliament. According to the last national census (2011) there were only approximately 40,000 Belarusians in the region. Therefore there have been no chances, and there will be none.

Interview conducted by Kiryl Kascian

Note: Dr. Jaŭhien Miranovič (Polish: Eugeniusz Mironowicz) is Polish historian and political scientist of Belarusian ethnicity, professor at the University of Białystok. His expertise embraces history of Belarus in the 20th century, ethnic and national issues in Central and Eastern Europe, and foreign policy of the post-Soviet countries.

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We count on improved relations with Belarus, even though it would be easier to believe in the sincerity of declarations of its authorities if prisoners of conscience were not behind bars, the Polish minority could organise itself freely, and each year did not see more Russian military infrastructure in Belarus. Yet, we do look for areas of agreement, as evidenced by the recent telephone conversation between Prime Minister Donald Tusk and President Aliaksandr Lukashenka. We have been supporting the development of people-to-people contacts, also through grant programmes for Belarusian non-governmental organisations and student scholarships. We maintain our readiness to open local border traffic and to finalise an education agreement. We support talks on visa facilitation and readmission between Belarus and the European Union.

Radosław Sikorski
May 8, 2014, Polish MFA

Polish local governments cooperate with Belarusian partners specifically in the fields of culture and economy. These are the most important areas of activity that help us understand each other," said the deputy chief of Poland's diplomacy.

Katarzyna Kacperczyk
May 15, 2014, Polish MFA

WILL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEFEND NATIONAL INTERESTS OF BELARUS?

VALERY KAVALEUSKI

The Kennan Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, held an event on April 22, 2014, with a direct and somewhat ominous title – "Belarus after Ukraine". A group of Belarusian experts participated in the event: Ina Ramasheuskaya (BIPART – Belarus Institute for Public Administration Reform), Dzianis Melyantsou (BISS – Belarusian Institute of Strategic Studies), Volha Charnysh (Ph.D. candidate, Harvard University), and Arsenij Sivitski (Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies) as well as Balazs Jarabik (PACT, USA).

New Charge d'Affaires of Belarus to the United States Paval Shydlouski attended the event. He replaced Aleh Krauchanka who has been known for his passive position on the issue of Belarusian identity. Belarus does not have a full-fledged diplomatic representation in the United States. At the demand of the Belarusian authorities both governments recalled their ambassadors in 2008 and downsized their staff to five diplomats. Since then functions of the Embassy of Belarus in Washington have been narrowed to the diplomatic protocol and mere physical representation.

The discussion of interaction between the state and society in Belarus can be summarized in several points:

- protest potential in Belarus is low, Maidan has not been very popular among Belarusians;

- Presidential Administration develops the entire range of policies, the rest of the government, headed by the prime--minister, is in the waiting mode;

- Lukashenka will sign the Eurasian Union agreement but the issue of oil prices will not be solved positively.

The discussion focused on the consequences deriving for Belarus from the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The representative of BISS talked about a new window of opportunities to develop relations of Belarus with Western powers. This contradicted Melyantsou's own words that the era of Lukashenka's balancing between Russia and the West has ended, and today there is a choice only between „the Russian World" and integration in the framework of the Eurasian Union.

In the opinion of the BISS expert, in order to strengthen sovereignty it is necessary to direct efforts to creating a network of interests of global actors: the United States, EU, and China. Such interests, for example, could include a Chinese industrial park and selling Belarusian enterprises to Western buyers. Melyantsou did not elaborate, however, how such measures can prevent Russia's aggression and how much time Belarus has to implement them, as they would require a lot of time. Moreover, perspectives of creating such network appear doubtful under unreliable and unpredictable Lukashenka.

As usual, the BISS representative spoke critically about West's inability to offer anything to Belarus in a long-term perspective. As usual, nothing was said about what Belarus can offer to the West, and what Lukashenka can do to normalize relations with the most progressive and resourceful part of the international community. Some Belarusian analysts remain true to the assumption that Lukashenka knows what to do and there is no need to refer to this question. As a result, it is more common for them to lecture the Westerners instead of making policy recommendation for the regime.

The main question – whether Belarus will be the next object of Russia's aggression after Ukraine – has not been discussed. Shydlouski assured that Belarus treats Ukraine as a brotherly nation. There will be no threat for Ukraine from Belarus. At the same time the Belarusian official stated that Belarus does not choose sides in this conflict. This assertion by Shydlouski contradicted the shameful voting of Belarus in the UN General Assembly against the resolution to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine on March 27, 2014. That vote undermined principled position of Belarus on the fundamentals of the international law: respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs. The most disgraceful aspect was that official Minsk abandoned its principles when the nation so close to Belarusians needed their support so badly.

As if to keep this issue open Minister of Foreign Affairs Uladzimir Makei has been until today avoiding to personally explain why the vote in the UN flatly contradicted his own statement in February of 2014. Then he stated that Belarus is interested in the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Official statements on the ministerial level are not dismissed lightly and without clear and convincing explanations.

Such inconsistency in actions, absence of obvious logic and clear position allow to conclude that official Minsk experiences serious pressure from Moscow. Putin considers the campaign against Ukraine as a turning point and he will not hesitate to use all available instruments to reach the objective. It is not clear where the „redline" is, when Makei and his ministry would say to the presidential administration „Stop, we can not relinquish our positions anymore, such steps contradict the Constitution, national interests of Belarus and norms of international law and behavior of nations".

Until today the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus has served as a silent accomplice to the destructive anti-national foreign policy of Lukashenka. The continuation of such weak approach to the issues directly connected to the future of Belarus will have its price for the most pro-Belarusian state institution. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can become the one to prepare the ground and sign the act to incorporate Belarus into Russia. In fact the signing of the Eurasia Union agreement on May 29, 2014, realized by the MFA is a step in exactly this direction.

The distorted foreign policy of Lukashenka's regime could be seen as a joke if only it has not generated so many

dangers to the sovereignty and independence of Belarus. During recent years all political decisions and activity of the state apparatus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs including, have been directed exclusively at the one and only task – to preserve the presidential powers exclusively for Alyaksandr Lukashenka. The longtime application of this approach has its heavy consequences. The mere fact that in so many years after regaining the independence the fate of Belarus is under permanent existential threat and that a neighboring state controls the right of Belarusians to determine their own future proves that the Lukashenka regime and its diplomacy are incapable and unwilling to defend the Constitution and national interests of Belarus.

Note: this article is updated from its original version that was initially published on the website of Belarusian periodical "Naša Niva" on April 25, 2014.

BELARUS: IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

DAVID MARPLES AND LIZAVETA KASMACH

NEAR ABROAD RELATIONSHIPS

On May 29, the leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan signed a new treaty to create a Eurasian Economic Union. The presidents of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan also attended the proceedings in the Kazakhstani capital of Astana, as potential new members. Interestingly, Belarusian president Aliaksandr Lukashenka expressed his view that "sooner or later" Ukraine would also be added to the list of new members. Perhaps he spoke more in hope than belief. In the wake of the dramatic events in Ukraine, Lukashenka finds his options more limited, with the economy in recession, and the relatively tolerant relationship with Russia currently in place, is unlikely to last long. Belarus signed the treaty, despite the president's earlier statement that he would sign only on condition that all trade restrictions between Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan would be lifted - something that is unlikely to happen before 2018.

The developments raise a number of questions about Belarus' future that will be addressed here. How have events in Ukraine affected Belarus and its relations with Russia? How does Belarus view Russian demands for the imposition of federalism in Ukraine, for example? How does Lukashenka view the government of Ukraine? Part two of this paper examines the following question: since Belarus is increasingly being drawn into the Russian orbit, despite official rhetoric to the contrary, how can it deal with its increasingly burdensome economic problems? What options remain open to Lukashenka?

Although he has stated publicly that in a crisis situation, Belarus would always stand with Russia, the Belarusian president has avoided any blanket condemnation of the interim Ukrainian government, formed after former president Viktor Yanukovych opted to leave Kyiv and take up residence in the Russian Federation. In interviews with the Russian network NTV, Lukashenka stated that he did not consider the interim government - dismissed by Vladimir Putin as a neo-Nazi junta - responsible for the situation in Ukraine. Rather he accused the Yanukovych regime of "wild corruption, destruction of the economy, and complete disorientation." He had held talks with the then acting president Oleksandr Turchynov, who understood the restricted potential for closer relations between Belarus and Ukraine. Lukashenka affirmed that there was no danger of incursions into Ukraine from Belarus and dismissed rumors that troops had been concentrated on the border between the two countries.

Lukashenka also elaborated his views on Yanukovych and federalization. He felt that the former president of Ukraine should have used his executive powers rather than letting the crisis escalate into bloodshed. Either he should have negotiated with the protesters or cracked down quickly - his

own preferred method after the protests that followed the 2010 presidential elections. Inaction was the worst possible choice and Yanukovych had failed to use the powers granted him by the Constitution of Ukraine. He added also that the wide-scale corruption in Ukraine had contributed to the negative economic picture and enhanced social tensions. In turn, Lukashenka rejected the concept of federalization as a path to division and the destruction of Ukraine as a state. He preferred a strong Ukraine rather than one in which the regions threatened to separate, though he also acknowledged that the proposed federalization might simply be a ploy to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO.

Various Belarusian politicians commented on Lukashenka's remarks. Leader of the United Civic Party Anatol Liabedzka stated that the Ukrainian situation might also occur in Belarus, in which case federalization was fraught with risks and danger. Aliaksandr Lahviniec, who is part of former presidential candidate Aliaksandr Milinkevich's team, thought that Lukashenka felt personally under threat, especially if the Kremlin wanted to pursue the creation of a single Russian-speaking state. But he also wanted to adopt the pose of an independent player and send certain signals to Ukraine. Aliaksei Yanukevich of the Belarusian Popular Front considered that Lukashenka was trying to play the role of intermediary in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, a role that was open because of the confrontation between the West and Russia. His attitude to Ukraine was likely to improve his image in that country, but resolution of the crisis there is in Belarus' interests too since a divided Ukraine would imperil Belarus' economic and national security. Finally Pavel Seviarynets of the Belarusian Christian Democracy, released from detention last October, observed that in the case of a military conflict, Lukashenka would be forced to act against Ukraine, and most of his comments are only intended to protect his reputation. In reality he has already allowed the deployment of Russian aircraft and he owes his present dilemma to his [pro-Russian] policies of the past twenty years.

FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

In many respects, the Belarusian leadership operates in a virtual world, one in which it maintains the fiction that it can pursue an independent foreign policy and opt to join European structures. Events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine since the beginning of March have shattered any illusions that it possesses such options. Perhaps also the limited response of the European Union to the growth of violence in Ukraine has provided a lesson for Belarus too, namely that if little can be done to assist friendly neighbors, then even less support is likely to be forthcoming for the Belarusian dictatorship. Belarus' response to the Ukrainian crisis is reminiscent of that in Georgia in 2008, when Lukashenka offered his sympathy to President Mikheil Saakashvili and he has refused to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia despite constant Russian pressure to so - another example perhaps of the *illusion* of independence.

Opinion polls suggest that the Ukraine crisis has raised pro-Russian sentiment among residents of Belarus. An April IISEPS survey indicated, for example, that given the choice, 51.5% of respondents preferred to join the Russian-led Customs Union, and only 32.9% the EU (reversing the December 2013 figures of 36.6% and 44.6% respectively). The figures, in the view of analyst Valer Karbalevich, demonstrate a pro-imperial mood in Belarus that could endanger the current regime, as well as its Ukrainian counterpart. This disturbing picture might be offset by factors such as a thriving and growing economy that provides a high level of stability for Belarusian citizens. But that is far from the reality. The symbolic but costly world hockey championship in Minsk represented but a temporary respite in what is becoming a very troubling time for the Republic of Belarus.

ECONOMY

For many years, the Belarusian economy has achieved high levels of growth while remaining under close state control and relying on loans from Russia or Russian led organizations. In turn it has relied heavily on exports to Russia, and a close trading relationship with former CIS countries, as well as imports from the EU. It has as far as possible sought to avoid devaluation of the currency - though it has occurred nonetheless—and to satisfy workers with regular salary increases. President Aliaksandr Lukashenka takes a remarkably personal interest in the situation, visiting enterprises, dismissing managers who fail to live up to expectations, and ordering the Council of Ministers to implement changes based on his instructions. It is not wholly a command economy, but it is one in which the president plays an extraordinary role, albeit at times symbolically.

Since 2008, the economy has started to unravel. The process is a slow one, but nonetheless discernible. Moreover, there is no question that the Ukraine crisis has had a negative impact on Belarus, not least because of the threat of recession in Russia (exacerbated by international sanctions), the latter country's need to attend to the needs of newly annexed Crimea, and the partial disruption of normal trading relations with its two closest neighbors to the east and south. Lukashenka for some time tried to balance relations with the EU and the Russian sphere, but the signing of the Customs Union Agreement on May 29 epitomized the country's dilemma. Belarus was obligated to join it, despite a failure to negotiate an end to customs duties on Russian imports and no Russian concessions concerning the notion of a common oil and gas market for Customs Union members.

In April, an IMF mission headed by David Hoffman visited Belarus. It noted that output growth remained at a low level, especially taking into consideration the high volumes of repayments of foreign debts in 2014--$3.2 billion—accompanied by a fall in international reserves. Hoffman noted that growth rates for the economy were very low in 2013, with GDP rising only by 0.9%. The IMF mission commented that the government of Belarus had tried to modify economic policy, relieving the pressures caused by obligatory GDP and salary increases. It had also introduced restraints on subsidized lending. Nonetheless, it offered what is now becoming familiar advice to the authorities: a stringent fiscal policy that

allows more flexibility for exchange rates while tightening monetary policy. The IMF also recommended a reduction of the state's role in the economy, starting up privatization and intensifying reforms to improve the situation with resource distribution

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The general Belarusian economic picture looks as follows. GDP in the first quarter of 2014 grew by 0.5% compared to the same period in 2013. Industrial output was down by 3.4% and agricultural output by 4.7%. Inflation, though not comparable to the catastrophic year of 2011, nevertheless remains the highest among all the former Soviet countries. Between January and April of this year, prices for goods and services in Belarus rose by 6.6%, which can be compared to those of its Customs Union partner countries., Russia and Kazakhstan, which saw rises of 3.2% and 3.9% respectively. In April, the price increase was 17.2% over the 2013 year . The major price increases have been in the sectors of housing and communal services (up by 20.8%), tobacco products (19.6%), potatoes (17.2%), medical services (13.3%), fruit (12.4%), and alcohol (11.6%).

Two experts analyzed the economic situation in late April. Economist Barys Zhaliba stated that earlier the economy had stagnated, but now it was entering recession. Growth was dependent on exports, which are declining. The Belarusian government's plans to increase exports to Russia by 6% to compensate for shortfalls in exports to Ukraine represented "wishful thinking." The decline in currency revenues could be explained by the situation in two specific spheres: potash and oil products. Though the situation in the former industry was improving, the consequences of the "potash war" between Belarus and the Urals Potash Company continued to have a negative effect on fertilizer sales on world markets: one ton of potash on average was $100 less than before the conflict. Zhaliba also noted that Belarus' main trading partners - Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine - had all devalued their currencies already, but the National Bank of Belarus had been hesitant because it was afraid that panic might ensue with residents withdrawing their savings from bank accounts, leading to economic collapse.

Aliaksandr Chubryk, director of the Research Institute of Privatization and Management, provided several reasons for the decline of GDP, which began in the fourth quarter of 2013. First, the Russian economy was also in recession. Second, the Belarusian ruble was overvalued with respect to the currencies of its main trading partners, Russia and Ukraine. Third, inflation in Belarus was far in excess of the tempo of ruble devaluation, creating problems for exports. Fourth, the Customs Union presented another obstacle. In such conditions, the only source of GDP growth is internal demand, which the government cannot meet as it might lead to another currency crisis and all its negative consequences. Therefore the government tries to control internal demand by limiting salary increases and borrowing, again slowing GDP growth. Chubryk added that there is no potential for growth of exports, while imports need to be lowered in order to control currency problems. Both analysts thus concur that the economy is struggling to maintain past growth levels.

POTASH

Belaruskali represents today the flagship of Belarusian industry, but it has also faced difficult times since the dispute with its Russian counterpart Uralkali. In 2013, its net profits fell by an astonishing 79.7% compared to 2012, while the average export price for potash has fallen by 4.5% . In mid-April, Lukashenka met with Dmitry Mazepin, deputy chairman of the board of Uralkali and chairman of the board of directors of Uralchem. At the meeting Lukashenka acknowledged that the potash conflict had benefited no one and that he was ready to discuss all options in light of the conflict in Ukraine and its destabilizing effects. Mazepin noted likewise that the dispute had resulted in a drop in prices not only for potash, but also for all types of fertilizers. Without the profits from Belaruskali, the Belarusian economy cannot sustain its former growth rates and the president, belatedly, has realized the impact of his role in the impasse.

PRESIDENTIAL CONTROL

Yet although Lukashenka appears to perceive some of the steps necessary to circumvent the current crisis, his approach remains somewhat limited, since he is unwilling to relinquish state control over major assets. In late April, he outlined his three main economic priorities: intensified development of the internal market, improvements in the entire sphere of economic policy, and encouragement of competition. Yet he also emphasized that he supported the "traditional directions" in the economy, including modernizing industries to enable them to sell in international markets, expanding state support for specified areas, and maintaining control over the modernization of large enterprises, such as the Belarusian Steelworks, Svietlahorsk cellulose plant, and others. Concerning devaluation, Lukashenka declared that he would introduce it gradually if gold reserves continued to fall below the critical level, but only by around 5-6% by the end of 2014. And although he instructed the Council of Ministers to come up with a five-year plan to develop the internal goods and services market, he stressed that the priority remained exports.

One example of Lukashenka's methods in dealing with enterprises that fail to meet his demands is that of the Barysaŭ wood processing company (Barysaŭdreva), which he visited last November for the second time, to see how his instructions on modernization were being fulfilled. Finding that his orders had been ignored, he ordered the arrest of manager Uladzimir Maltsau on March 14, and confiscated his belongings. Company losses as a result of alleged criminal activities of Maltseu amounted to $150,000. Many high-ranking officials lost their jobs, as did the chairman of the Minsk Oblast Executive Committee, Barys Batura and deputy chairman of the Presidential Administration, Andrei Tur. The factory in question was in crisis because of stiff domestic competition, and had been dumping its products and lowering salaries, which were among the lowest in the country. Similar arrests and charges of mismanagement were also applied to several other countries at this same time, including the Minsk Tractor Plant, Belnaftakhim, Naftan, and others. The methods are

familiar and typical of socialist industry, but as anti-crisis consultant Mechyslau Burak noted, threats and arrests are not the best means of introducing modernization.

CONCLUSION

In the long term, the economic model in place in Belarus is unlikely to be sustainable, though it could conceivably continue for some time. The "new economic course" advocated by the president, is essentially the old one, an administrative--command system, headed by Lukashenka. The Belarusian economy is also highly dependent on trade with Russia and Ukraine, particularly for exports, but the Ukraine crisis has put former relations in jeopardy and the situation could be complicated further if the conflict does not end in the near future. Privatization in Belarus to date has signified Russian takeovers of profitable companies and proposed mergers of many others (Belaruskali in this respect is the biggest single remaining asset in the hands of the Belarusian state). At present the economic instability has not affected the popularity and standing of the president, who has benefited—ironically in view of the problems it has caused—from the Ukrainian Euromaidan and fears of instability should Belarus follow a similar course.

At the same time, Russia is currently preoccupied with Ukraine, which is beneficial for Belarus and its short-term negotiations concerning oil and gas, as well as for requesting loans or other concessions. In the long term, however, Russia will likely require more commitment from Belarus, not only in the Customs Union, but also as a geostrategic partner - it may be forced to limit or even sever its relations with Ukraine- and Vladimir Putin's efforts to expand Russian influence in the former Soviet space. At some point, Lukashenka's reticence in reforming the economy is likely to be exposed as a serious flaw, particularly given the fact that this summer will mark his twentieth anniversary as president.

QUOTES

We felt the need to restore economic ties existed in the times of the Soviet Union. We were preparing for the establishment of the [Eurasian Economic] Union taking into account the interest of every state. Moreover, we tried to create a system where we would not compete but complement each other.

Aliaksandr Lukashenka
May 29, 2014, KazInform

Belarus has been and will be an active proponent of integration in the post-Soviet space. Working on the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty, we pursued concrete pragmatic economic goals just like our partners did. First of all, we believed that the Eurasian Economic Union should be built on the basis of a full--value Customs Union without any exemptions and restrictions.

Siarhiei Rumas
May 29, 2014, BelTA

CULTURE & HISTORY

BELARUS' UNBALANCED BILINGUALISM

CURT WOOLHISER

In this text I look at bilingualism in Belarus in the sense of the social distribution of language proficiency and language use. In most officially bilingual or multilingual polities, the population is characterized by significant ethnolinguistic diversity, usually with a significant territorial-administrative dimension (for example, Canada, India, Belgium, Switzerland, etc.). What is striking about Belarus, particularly in the context of the other post-Soviet states, is that the population is quite homogeneous in terms of ethno-national identity. According to the 2009 census, self-identified Belarusians accounted for 83.7% of the population (up from 81.2% in 1999), while Russians accounted for only 8.3% (down from 11.4%). If "Belarusian" is understood as primarily an ethnic, rather than civic identity, this would in fact make Belarus one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in the post-Soviet region, similar to neighboring Lithuania, where according to government estimates from 2011 self-declared ethnic Lithuanians comprise 83.9% of the population.

However, the level of proficiency in and use of Belarusian and Russian in Belarus, as reflected in the results of national censuses and surveys, presents a quite different picture. In the 2009 census, 53% of the total population (and 60% of self-declared Belarusians) indicated Belarusian as their "native language" (*родная мова/родной язык*), while 41.5% of the population indicated Russian in this capacity. As far as the language used in the home is concerned, in 2009 23% (out of a total population of 9.5 million) claimed to speak Belarusian, with 70% claiming to speak Russian. It is important to note that the 2009 Belarus census represented a significant departure from previous censuses in terms of the manner in which the category "native language" was presented. In the 1999 Belarus census, which followed Soviet practice, "native language" was left undefined, although in the Soviet context it was generally interpreted as the language associated with one's ethnic group, whether or not one speaks it fluently. As the Ukrainian sociologist Volodymyr Kulyk has noted, "native language" in the sense of "language of one's ethnic heritage" is still an important part of what he calls "linguistic identity," which may or may not reflect an individual's actual linguistic proficiency or language use, but is still an important factor influencing, for example, attitudes toward the language and preferences in the sphere of language policy. In contrast to the 1999 census and its Soviet-era counterparts, in the 2009 census "native language" was explicitly defined in the questionnaire as "the language learned first in early

childhood" (*мова, засвоеная першай у раннім дзяцінстве / язык, усвоенный первым в раннем детстве*). The inclusion of this explicit and more restrictive interpretation of "native language" was regarded by Belarusian language advocates as an obvious move by the authorities to justify a continued rollback in the use of Belarusian in education and other spheres of public life.

In addition to national census data, language proficiency and language use in Belarus has also been the focus of a number of surveys conducted by government agencies, independent polling organizations and research groups. While such surveys are not entirely free of bias, or at the very least may, like the national censuses, impose certain categories and distinctions that are not entirely congruent with local perceptions of sociolinguistic reality, they do in some respects offer a more nuanced picture of the language situation than that presented by national census data.

Since 1995, the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies has conducted periodic surveys to chart the dynamics of self-reported language use ("What language do you mainly use in everyday communication?"). In June of 1995, the IISEPS survey found that only 4.5% of the respondents reported using Belarusian, 37.3% Russian, 7.8% both Russian and Belarusian, and 50% "mixed language." In June of 2011, the figures were 1.9% - Belarusian, 57.1% - Russian, 15.9% - both Russian and Belarusian, and 24.8% - "mixed language." In contrast to the censuses, the surveys allowed for multiple responses, for example, "both Russian and Belarusian" as well as "mixed language"; it seems likely that many of the respondents choosing these variants would have indicated Belarusian as their language of the home on the census. The significant increase in the percentage indicating Russian as their language of everyday communication is quite striking, as is the decline in the numbers claiming to speak mainly Belarusian. While the increase in the percentage of self-reported speakers of Russian appears to be a sign of progressing linguistic assimilation, it must be borne in mind that this may also reflect to some extent a change in linguistic self--perception of speakers of mixed Belarusian-Russian varieties.

In August-September 2009 and again in March of 2012, the Budźma campaign, in collaboration with the independent Belarusian survey agency NOVAK, conducted surveys not only of language use, but also reported language proficiency. According to the 2009 Budźma/NOVAK survey, 31.6% of respondents reported active speaking, reading and writing proficiency in Belarusian, with 42.7% claiming passive reading and listening proficiency. However, only a small minority, 2.3%, claimed to be unable to understand spoken Belarusian. In the 2012 survey, the percentage of those claiming active speaking proficiency in Belarusian had declined to 23.4%, although it has to be borne in mind that this figure only represents linguistic self-perceptions, rather than actual linguistic competence. It seems unlikely that in only three years the percentage of those with strong Belarusian language skills actually declined by over 8%; rather, if anything, it probably reflects a decline in linguistic self-confidence, that is, a more critical assessment on the part of respondents of their language ability.

The Budźma/NOVAK surveys also reflect a striking discrepancy between reported language proficiency and language use; while between 1/3 to 1/4 of the population claimed active speaking proficiency in Belarusian, in March of 2012 only about 4% said that they speak it all the time. At the same time, although 73% of the respondents reported that they use Russian constantly, only 26% claimed never to use Belarusian at all. In fact, a majority of the population claimed to use Belarusian "often" (12%), "sometimes" (23%) or at least "rarely" (35%). At the same time, a significant segment of the population claim to speak "the local language" (i.e. local dialect or the local variety of mixed dialectal Belarusian-Russian speech): "all the time"(20%), "often" (10%), "sometimes" (17%), and "rarely" (16%).

In other words, the survey results appear to indicate that even if it is not the language they use most of the time, a majority of Belarusian citizens claim to use Belarusian at least occasionally. These results naturally raise some questions about bilingualism as a societal phenomenon in Belarus. Given that Russian is the functionally dominant language, it could be said that the most common type of bilingualism in Belarus is "unbalanced bilingualism," meaning that bilinguals use one of their languages more often and in a broader range of contexts. But with unbalanced bilingualism, without any measures to ensure that the use of the functionally weaker language will remain stable in at least some social domains, there is a strong tendency toward "replacive" or "subtractive" bilingualism, i.e. the gradual loss of fluency in the weaker language, which is clearly what has happened in the case of Belarusian.

One of the problems with relying on respondents' subjective evaluations of their linguistic behavior in censuses and surveys, rather than data from empirical observation of actual speech, is that it does not provide a very clear picture of what respondents mean when they claim to use Belarusian at least some of the time. In theory, "occasional" use of Belarusian, could involve a number of different types of linguistic behavior: situational code-switching into Belarusian (for example, if an ordinarily Russian-speaking individual finds him/herself in Belarusian-speaking company), the insertion of Belarusian words and phrases in Russian speech (often for expressive effect), or possibly even the functionally unmotivated mixture of the two languages (trasianka).

A recent study by a group of German researchers (Kittel et al. 2010) sheds further light on Belarusians' linguistic identities and the diverse linguistic practices that may correspond to "occasional use" of Belarusian. In 2008 these researchers surveyed a random sample of 1,400 Belarusian citizens in seven locations, including Minsk and six medium-sized and smaller towns, about their language use. What they found was that while very few people, if any, claimed to speak standard Belarusian as their main language of everyday communication (only 1.1% for respondents age 50 and older, and 0% for teenagers), at the same time, only 7.2% of those 50 and over, and only 13.7% of teenagers claimed to speak "standard Russian" (русский литературный язык). As for "Belarusian with some Russian words," 4.9% of the 50+ age cohort and

2.5% of teenagers characterized their speech in this manner, while 55.5% and 33.4%, respectively, described their everyday speech as "Belarusian-Russian or Russian-Belarusian mixed language." While the role of Russian as a language of everday communication has continued to increase since the 1990s, it is striking that respondents characterize this language not as simply "standard Russian" but as "Russian with some Belarusian words."

Kittel and his colleagues also investigated their respondents' views as to the linguistic identity of "mixed language" or trasianka. They found that 39.3% of their respondents consider "mixed language" to be a variant of Belarusian, while a smaller number, 18.7% consider it to be a variant of Russian. Strikingly, however, roughly the same percentage as those who consider "mixed language" a variety of Belarusian, 39.9%, consider it to be a language in its own right.

Returning to the results of the 2009 Budźma/NOVAK survey, it is also interesting to note the difference between the percentage of Belarusian citizens who claim to never speak Belarusian (23%) and the percentage who claim not to be able to understand the language (3.9%). This suggests a very high degree of "receptive bilingualism," that is, the ability to understand another language, but not speak it. Receptive bilingualism in Belarus is a product of several factors: first, exposure to the language (or dialectal forms thereof) though family members and other members of individuals' social networks; second, exposure to the standard language through the educational system (although in the case of individuals who attended school in urban areas in the late Soviet period, this formal exposure to the standard language may have been absent); and third, the relatively close linguistic relationship between Belarusian and Russian, making possible some degree of mutual intelligibility (although non-fluent speakers may at times overestimate their level of comprehension of Belarusian, especially in its standard form).

"Receptive" or "passive" bilingualism in Belarus gives rise to another phenomenon that the American linguistic anthropologist Laada Bilaniuk terms "non-accommodating bilingualism": in certain communicative situations, the interlocutors may each speak a different language, neither of them switching to the other's code (Bilaniuk observes this in operation in Ukraine as well). This is often seen in television or radio interviews, where the interviewer speaks Belarusian, and the person being interviewed speaks Russian.

Unlike the situation where distantly-related or completed unrelated languages are in contact, in the case of bilingualism involving closely-related languages like Belarusian and Russian, it is not always clear where to draw the line between one and the other when we are referring to people's everyday communicative practices. As is well known, over the last half century the Belarusian dialects have been gradually converging toward Russian, leaving in many areas only the oldest rural dwellers as fluent speakers of the more archaic traditional Belarusian dialects that formed the basis of the modern Belarusian literary language in the early 20th century. Younger villagers typically speak mixed varieties, incorporating elements of the traditional local dialect, Russian, and to a more limited extent, general Belarusian features (particularly in the areas of phonetics and morphology). As a result of this linguistic convergence, coupled with mass migration from rural areas to the largely-Russian speaking cities over the last half century, what has developed in Belarus could be described as a bifurcated linguistic continuum, with the now largely moribund traditional rural dialects at one end (the basilect), and the high-prestige standard Russian and standard Belarusian languages at the other (the acrolectal varieties). Individuals of different social and educational backgrounds have a command of different, albeit partially overlapping segments of the continuum, with higher status speakers showing speech that is closer to the acrolectal varieties (usually Russian, although a smaller subset of the population has some degree of fluency in standard Belarusian as well). Much of the population will tend to use in everyday communication a range of intermediate varieties, or mesolects, with individuals combining in various proportions basilectal and acrolectal features depending on their social and educational background and the speech situation. As I've noted previously, while fewer people have an active command of standard Belarusian, the form of standard Russian in Belarus, even as spoken by educated urban dwellers, differs to some extent from the late Soviet-era spoken Russian norm that is still considered the model for educated speakers in most Russian-speaking areas. Thus, at the acrolectal level of this bifurcated continuum, the ability to switch freely from standard Belarusian to standard Russian, and vice versa, is probably quite limited. Most speakers of standard Belarusian will show some influence from Belarusian in their Russian speech, while standard Russian speakers who have learned Belarusian as a second language will often show some degree of Russian phonetic influence in their Belarusian.

Another important aspect of Belarusian "bilingualism," understood both as state language policy and language use, is the question of language attitudes and language policy preferences. As regards public perceptions of the relationship between the active use of Belarusian and Belarusian identity the 2009 Budźma/NOVAK survey revealed that for most respondents, there are more important factors than language in defining a person's "Belarusianness." In the opinion of the respondents, a Belarusian is above all a person who has been brought up in Belarusian culture and considers it his or her own (41.3%), who was born to Belarusian parents (34.1%), who loves Belarus (33.9%) and who considers him or herself a Belarusian (30.5%). However, only 4.4% said that above all a Belarusian is someone who speaks Belarusian.

The same survey shows that although the active use of Belarusian is not perceived as a key marker of membership in the nation, the language still functions as an important national symbol. In the 2009 Budźma/NOVAK survey, we find large percentages of the population who view the Belarusian language as a part of the national patrimony that must be preserved and respected (45.8%) and as a national symbol (35.5%), while only 12.4% feel that Belarusian is a living European language that should be spoken today. At the same time, only a minority (16.8%) still associate the Belarusian lan-

guage with isolated rural areas, an interesting finding given the fact that the village was traditionally viewed as the main bulwark against linguistic Russification. This could be said to be a reflection of the fact that mixed Belarusian-Russian varieties have supplanted the traditional dialects in many areas, and have thus assumed many of the negative stereotypes that were formerly associated with Belarusian dialectal speech.

It is also noteworthy, however, that in the 2009 survey only a small minority regard Belarusian as above all the language of the Belarusian opposition (3.2%) or the intelligentsia (8.1%), despite the fact that these stereotypes were still quite widespread in Belarusian society in the 1990s and are still often reflected in official discourse, including that of President Lukashenka himself. Nearly half of all of the respondents in the two surveys considered people who speak Belarusian all of the time to be "true patriots" (48% in 2009 and 47% in 2012), while the percentage of those who consider Belarusian speakers to represent the "nation's elite" increased from 5.5% in 2009 to 10.4% in 2012.

If the Belarusian language is more important to a majority of Belarusians as a symbol than as a language of everyday communication, how is this reflected in public attitudes and preferences in the sphere of language policy? Over the last five years, a number of surveys have been conducted in Belarus by independent and government-sponsored survey agencies to try to gauge the degree of public support for measures to expand the public use of Belarusian. In a survey of a random sample of 1,500 Belarusian citizens, carried out in March of 2008 by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, it was found that exclusive use of Belarusian in the public sphere was advocated by only 13.6% of the respondents, which, it should be noted is still more than twice the percentage of those who favored exclusive use of Russian. Another group who would appear to favor proactive measures in support of Belarusian are those who advocated actual equality of the languages in the public sphere, 27.2% of the total in the 2008 IISEPS survey. At the same time, however, the largest group, 37.2%, favored the status quo, which implies a relatively marginal role for Belarusian. The group favoring usage proportional to the number of Belarusian speakers, 12.8% of all respondents, was perhaps the least well-defined in terms of preferences in language policy. If "speakers" are defined at those who consider it their native language, then this group could represent advocates of preferential usage of Belarusian, with parallel use of Russian in some social domains; however, if "speakers" are defined as those who actually use the language on a daily basis, then this group would be closer to the proponents of the status quo.

One of the most striking results of the 2008 IISEPS survey was that 18 to 19 year olds support the status quo (about 40%) to the same extent as the oldest respondents (60+), and only 9.7% support total Belarusianization; compare this to 32.8% supporting the status quo among 25 to 29 year olds (the lowest figure of any age group) and 16.8% supporting complete Belarusianization among 25 to 29 year olds. The youngest respondents also showed the highest level of support for exclusive use of Russian in the public sphere, 12.9% of the total (as compared with 3.3% of those 60 years and older).

These data do seem to confirm a small increase in the level of commitment to the Belarusian language among youth in the earlier part of the last decade (i.e. those who were in their late teens and early 20s around 2000), which was also reflected in reports of a growing "fashion" for Belarusian particularly among university students.

While most public opinion research in Belarus concerning issues of language use and language policy has been carried out by independent survey agencies, in September 2009 the Presidential Administration's Center for Information and Analysis released the results of its own survey. In addition to finding that 81.9% of the population claimed to know Belarusian well enough to speak and read it, according to press reports the survey also revealed that 50.1% of the country's population supported the wider use of Belarusian in the public sphere, on the condition that this be done without any "excesses," while roughly 1/3 of all respondents stated that the current level of public use of Belarusian was sufficient. In addition, according to the same government survey, 50.8% of those polled felt that state support for the Belarusian language is necessary, while only 27.1% felt that such support was unjustified. Even more strikingly, the survey showed that 58.2% of respondents were "entirely" or "partly" willing to use Belarusian in cultural institutions, and 56.9% in the sphere of education. While press reports did not provide information on the sampling procedure, raising some questions about the reliability of these survey results, their broad dissemination by the Belarusian State Telegraph Agency (BELTA) and other official media suggested that the authorities were laying the groundwork for new language policy initiatives, or at least seeking to create the impression of official concern about the status of Belarusian.

The surveys conducted in August-September 2009 and March 2012 by the Budźma campaign and NOVAK also included questions concerning respondents' preferences regarding language use in various spheres of public life. According to the 2012 survey, 50% of the respondents supported expanded use of Belarusian in government and public administration, 55.4% of the respondents supported the increased use of Belarusian in the mass media, 64% supported increased use of Belarusian in public signage, 55.6% supported a greater presence for Belarusian in advertising (up from 37% in 2009), while 47% supported the increased use of Belarusian in the sphere of education.

Significantly, the 2012 Budźma/NOVAK survey also showed that 42.9% of the respondents feel that the government is not doing enough to promote the use of Belarusian in the public sphere. At the same time, as regards their own language use only about a third of the respondents would like to improve their knowledge of the language (29.5% in 2009 and 29.1% in 2012) or have access to more television and radio programs in Belarusian (30.6% in 2009 and 30.3% in 2012), and even fewer would like to be able to use Belarusian all the time in public places (24.3% in 2009 and 27.6% in 2012) or at their place of work (14.6% in 2009 and 18.2% in 2012).

NAZI CRIMES IN THE USSR AS DESCRIBED IN THE WWII LETTERS, DIARIES AND MEMOIRS OF NATIVES OF BELARUS

LEONID SMILOVITSKY

Note: *this is the second part of the article by Leonid Smilovitsky, the first part of this text was published in Belarusian Review, volume 26, issue 1.*

FROM GHETTO TO RED ARMY

Letters written by a few very lucky ghetto survivors and telling about Nazi crimes in the occupied territories are of particular trust. One can understand what these people felt when they became soldiers, when they took up arms and were able to fight the enemy. As Ilya Ehrenburg figuratively stated, the Germans thought that the Jews were target. They saw the target shoots. Many dead Germans could have told how Jews do fight.[16]

Here's how it looked in the story by Efim (Chaim) Rosinoer, the prisoner of the Minsk ghetto and death camp Trostenets:

September 15, 1944

I had a good fortune to be one of the few who survived. For two years in the ghetto (Minsk - LS) and a year in the camp (Trostenets – LS), I witnessed most horrific crimes. I saw how Germans burned people alive, I saw how Germans trampled with their boots an orphanage with children under five years of age, I saw gas vans and barely escaped them once. Many times I was close to death, but got off with a whole skin and finally lived up to the moment when I could take revenge on the Germans for all my torment, for my family, who also, like me, loved life and wanted to live up to best times. I will never forget what I saw with my own eyes, I will never forget tens of thousands of innocent women, children, older people, infants who were brutally and without compunction tortured by Germans simply for being Jews. When the Red Army arrived in Minsk I volunteered to war and have participated in many battles. Now at the fascist den, I am not afraid of death at all because I know what I will give my life for. This is the end for now. Greetings to all friends and family.

I am waiting for your answer! I kiss you hard! Your Fima. [17]

Efim did not live to the Victory day. His died heroically on March 17, 1945, but kept his word. In the Order of Glory of the 3rd level award list of October 25, 1944, we can read:

A Red Army man Efim I. Rosinoer (born 1925) is a telephonist at the signal operations company of the 508th Grodno Infantry Regiment (174 Borisov Infantry Order of the Red Banner Division, 31st Army). Brief description of personal feat of arms: On October 21, 1944 during the breakthrough battle in the area of Las Sierski (Poland), the German mortar fire broke communication between the first and the second battalions in 12 places. At the risk of his life Comrade Rosinoer restored the connection. While capturing the first trench, Vikharev, the signal operation company's commander lieutenant was wounded. At their counter-attack Germans wanted to capture him. Rosinoer did not get confused and under fire saved the officer's life, carrying him out from the battlefield.[18]

Rosinoer did not have a chance to fight for a long time. The letter and the archival document cited above confirm not only the level of exasperation, but also prove his high motivation, logics and behavioral predictability. Such people as Rosinoer had their personal grudge against the Nazis, they acted calmly. But the war is a lottery, in which the well-deserved do not always survive.

LETTERS FROM THE EVACUATION AREAS

The Jews who managed to evacuate in an orderly manner (together with enterprises and institutions they worked at) or escape before the arrival of Nazis had no illusions. They mourned those who remained in the occupied territories as if they were dead:

March 23, 1942

We have an enormous heartbreak: our girls – Anechka (10 years old) and Galochka (4 years) remained, probably, in the town of Shatilki, Parichi district, Polesye Region). My parents lived there and at the beginning of the war, our children were in the country house. What happened to them - I'm afraid to even think about it. Boris is just going crazy. This damned Hitler dispersed all from their homes. Many people will not see their dearest. I work as a stenographer at the newspaper "Red Army" in Saratov. Hlebka worked here at one time.[19] Now he is somewhere at front. When do we return to our Belarus? The day comes when we will again be in Minsk and will build a happy life. I beg you to write me a few words. I am especially concerned about your mom. If it is not difficult, write to the old Kleins' address.[20]

November 22, 1943

My dear Rosa!

We are waiting for the early destruction of the fascists, and then we all gather in our homes. We all have just one thought – only death to the fascists. If you only knew, how wild the Nazis behavior was towards us in the occupied area — it was something incredible. Mass executions of children, women and older people. Their bestial behavior is indescribable. A mad person would not have done this. It's disgusting to think about them. Our entire nation hates the fascists so much; I am ready to give up my life for their complete destruction. I do not want to write more about these wild beasts.[21]

January 26, 1945

My dears!

Certainly the overall mood is to destroy the German fascism at its roots. Our daddy (Aaron Chechik – LS) was killed by the fascist beasts (in Turov – LS), this message I received recently. I have no information about Solomon. Sister Rolka with children remained in Turov, I have no information about them either. Only few of those who remained in occupied areas, survived. Many were sent deep into Germany. There

are many victims of the fascist invasion.

My son Eric (8 years old) wrote to me: "Daddy work well, to have fascists destroyed soon". Even a child's thoughts are working in this direction. Our hatred against the fascists is so huge that even children express it.[22]

On January 22, 1944 Meer Tsypin wrote from Novosibirsk to Leningrad[23]:

What I am going to write about? I have no big news. When we strangle Hitler – this will be good news. As for Mstislavl, we heard that when Germans came in, they gathered all Jews, sent them to the Trinity hill and shot them all there. Our family lost 40 percent of the people. We hope that Hitler will pay for everything.

Mstislavl was occupied on July 14, 1941. When the Tsypins returned from evacuation, they learned that robberies and murders began on first days of the occupation. On October 15, 1941, the Nazis gathered all Jews of Mstislavl, ranked them into a column and drove to the Kahal ditch. The trenches were prepared a night before. Jews were led up in groups of ten people and forced to strip naked; valuables were confiscated. People were stacked into dense rows face down and shot. So, first all men were killed, then women and children shared their fate. Small children were wrested, banging head to head in the front of their mothers and thrown into the pit alive. Only during one single day Nazis executed 1,300 Jews, both adults and children. Among them there were relatives of the Tsypins: their grandfather, aunt and the little cousin. After the execution, water in the nearest well became red.[24]

Now, a small monument to the victims of Nazism marks the place of mass executions of the Mstislavl Jews. It has a touching inscription, but nothing is said about Jews.[25]

RESPONSES TO INQUIRES FROM THE LIBERATED AREAS

As a rule, inquires came from families of the evacuated countrymen. Another part of the inquiries originated from soldiers of the combat army. They sought to clarify the fate of their loved ones who had failed to evacuate. Local authorities were the only body one could refer to. The queries were particularly intensive during the first months after the liberation of Belarusian SSR. The executive committees of the councils (village, town, district and city) were overwhelmed by letters concerning similar issues. However, with few exceptions the responses were disappointing:

June 29, 1944

Dear Parents!

I write this letter hoping you are not here. But if not, can anyone read this letter and answer me, your son, about your fate? If somehow miraculously you happen to be here and receive this letter, be sure and reply to me, at least in two words: "We are alive". I know nothing about you since the war began in 1941. I parted with my family members not knowing their fates. A few days ago it was reported that Chereya was freed from Germans. Perhaps you are somehow still alive, so I ask you to answer me immediately.[26]

The letter was returned by the chief of local post office. The text of the response stated that "your relatives who had lived in Chereya were killed by Germans on March 6, 1942 during the massacre of Jewish population". In pogrom in Chashniki in March 1942 the entire family of lieutenant Mikhail Mirkin was killed: his parents Sara and Lazar, sister Asya, brothers Borya and Grisha.[27]

September 14, 1944

To comrade Gelfand.

To your inquiry about the fates of Yankel Ts. Litvin and Gerusiy Z. Badanin, the Svisloch village council notes that Y.Ts. Litvin died with his family in October 1941. G.Z. Badanin with his family also died in October 1941.

They died at the hands of fascist monsters during mass destruction – the execution of the Jewish population in October 1941. Their property was eviscerated, and their buildings remained. The village council is currently located in the house of Litvin; the Badanin's house is occupied by private dwellers. Secretary of the village council Burak.[28]

It is noteworthy that the response contained not only information about the execution of Jews, but also about the fate of their property: "*The village council is currently located in the house of Litvin; the Badanin's house is occupied by private dwellers*". This was a part of the Nazi policies – to get rid of Jews but to turn local population into Nazi accomplices by promising them to use Jewish property for cooperation or loyalty, and to oppose the two groups of population against each other. This widespread practice has produced results.

LETTERS FROM NEIGHBORS (JEWS AND NON-JEWS)

In their letters Jews shared information drawn from various sources. Eyewitness accounts or information from those of their countrymen, who first happened to come to places of execution or ashes were considered most reliable. These were disappointing stories, but even bitter truth was considered better than uncertainty and ambivalence. Knowledge about the tragedy was necessary not only to learn about the last days and hours of the relatives' lives, but also to plan the future.To return home or not?

July 27, 1944

Hello, dear neighbors,

greetings to you from Illarion F. Selitsky.

Having received your letter I am giving a precise answer about your parents

I am informing you that on August 18, 1941 your family, father, mother, sister and your daughter were taken by German bastards to the town of Zembin. There they were shot — altogether 816 people together with Zembin Jews, and your family property was confiscated by Germans. I inform you that our village of Lisino and other [villages]... of the Korsakov village council were all burned down, and shot or burned population — altogether 500 persons. Now we remained miserable… and there is no help…

We at least managed to live… During three years, i.e. 1942-1943 and 1944, we were blocked and burned three times, and everyone… was shot, population remained only in

Zemets(?). There is no paper to write more. Therefore good bye. We all remain alive and well. I wait for your answer.[29]

July 12, 1944

Dear Natasha and Tolya!

How fortunate that I found you alive, this is fate's best gift for me. We lost our dad Vasily Dmitrievich. He could not bear the shock of the German boot, and died of cardiac rupture. Our grandmother and me had to suffer a lot from Germans, we had to sit in prison and in camps behind barbed wire. Germans have taken all from us. Now we don´t have any shelter, — our home and belongings burned, in the camps the last clothing and footwear were taken from us. Now our grandmother and me came back from the camps near Lepel. We walked 150 kilometers naked and barefoot, the Germans took everything from us, down to boots. But life is very difficult, we have so many painful memories. I want to see you all, then I can die, but it is very difficult now to come.

Greetings to everyone alive. I kiss you hard. Your mom.[30]

August 25, 1944

My David!

If you only knew how much effort cost me this time. I could not even focus to write you. But that is not all. The tragedy that happened to Vera shook all my soul and took peace away from me. How beautifully and how terribly she was killed. Here is how it happened: Vera was all the time a communication agent for the partisans. On June 24, 1944 she was seized and on June 27 this area was already freed from Germans – there were only three days to live, but if she were shot, or hanged, it would be nothing. But the following happened: she was bitten so badly that she wrote a note with her own blood. Then the dogs were hallowed on her, they covered) her body, then her arms were broken. Then, having obtained nothing from her, they crucified her on the wall of the barn. So she died. My God, what power is hidden in man! A five-year girl remained, whom I took with me. Now there are three of us – me, Olya and Svetlana. I kiss you very hard. Your Manya.[31]

April 17, 1945

Dear fellow landwoman Firochka!!!

I incidentally read your letter to Kuziner. I decided to write a few words to you, despite the fact that it is not common to write such things, but what can we do, this is our fate. You would like to know who lives in Kupin? In Kupin[32] not a single person remained, everyone was destroyed, all houses demolished, one feels horror seeing everyone and everything destroyed. Nobody evacuated from Kupin, and there is no one to return. I was in Kupin once, my heart torn to pieces when I looked at such demolition, but we cannot do anything, the road to our beloved place of birth is being overgrown, we have no place to go anymore, no relatives, no friends, no one.

Sorry for this senseless letter. I became so excited when I was writing about our misfortune that my hands are shaking from nervousness. I ask you to write me about everything. Sonya.[33]

THIRST FOR RETRIBUTION

War crimes caused a fair feeling of revenge and need for retribution. Getting letters from home and having witnessed consequences of mass murders, Jewish soldiers considered themselves obliged to pay off the Nazis:

1942, undated

There is no doubt that everything that has been destroyed, will be restored. Now, when you look at all this, you feel terrible anger and want to beat and beat Germans. As for me personally, I can write one thing that I fulfill its role, and I have been never ashamed of my name. I am hereby safe and sound.

1943, undated

Hello, dear Raya, Vova and Lyusya!

Yesterday I had an exceptionally happy day! I got four letters at once. First of all, I congratulate Vova, he celebrates his 8th birthday. I do not have gifts for him, but I will try to arrange everything during this day so that our unit kills more Germans, and now this is the best gift. Destroying the Germans, we will create for our children such conditions that they will be able to grow in free country happily. All roads for the future will again be opened for them.[34]

November 2, 1944

Dear mommy!

Today I received a letter from Hana. I knew as much that in Turov we have nothing left and that there is no need to go there. A lovely place where we had lived for so many years. But the war taught us not to regret such things. We all lost so much to regret our house.

I walked a long way - from Caucasus to the Carpathian Mountains. And I saw a lot: ashes of burned villages, destroyed cities, demolished palaces. But all this seems nothing comparing to the millions of bloody butchers' victims. Dear mommy, I saw these huge pits where hundreds and thousands of our people lie dead. Old people, women, children – all indiscriminately. The cities where I saw only few Jews who managed to escape from death. They told us about the terrible pictures of the mass murders. That is it – a great human misfortune. And we will wreak vengeance for this. We will kill these Heinies as they killed our people. They will face great sorrow. Soon we will go over Budapest and Berlin! To smash those damn bastards in their own mansions![35]

February 2, 1945

My dears!

So, I am in Germany. We came to punish, chasten malefactors for everything they did to us. We must get these people to crawl under our legs and obey our signs. And we will do it. We will discourage their appetite to fight, appetite to do it forever.

March 7, 1945

…There is no family that did not experience grief in this war and did not lose their beloved ones. The more we hate the enemy – this weapon can be equated to artillery. Hatred is a heavy weapon. We will not allow Germans to live. Only some of them will remain to exist (not live) to work out what they robbed. I consider dead Fritzes on the roads as stones, while the murdered dog causes sorrow.[36]

It is not difficult to understand the authors of these letters. Every one of them had their own sorrowful experience, own scores to settle with the Nazis. However, once in Germany, Soviet Jews in the military overcoats did not demonstrate blind hatred. Settling scores with civilians, unarmed, defenseless and devastated by war was inhumane. German civilians made no resistance; they were spiritually broken and disoriented by the Nazi propaganda. The letters from soldiers contained lines in which could be found not only the notes of malevolence but also empathy.

February 5, 1945

Dear dad and mum!

There is less than a hundred kilometers to Berlin. Soon we will march through the streets of this capital city of murderers and torturers, demonstrating the world the power and strength of the Russian arms. Look how these "Herren" and "Frauen" are thrilled when we call at their villages and towns. Brainwashed by Goebbels´ propaganda, they expected to meet a horde of robbers and murderers... But we are not Germans, and we did not kill children, old people and women. I never dreamed of being in Germany. And now I had to. Someday, perhaps, if I am back, I will have to tell you everything about all my way. I heard a lot of interesting things, you cannot describe everything indeed.[37]

In most cases, the soldiers of combat army vented their hatred on the personal property of the German civilian population. However, this was neither common practice, nor was it widespread. Depredation and violence were strictly forbidden and suppressed by the Soviet command.

BITTERNESS OF THE LOSS

Sufferings experienced during the war and the enormous human losses did not allow to settle nerves even after the Victory. In the letters people congratulated each other on the end of the war and simultaneously exchanged their views about the price it cost:

May 9, 1945

Hello, my dears!!

I kiss you all and congratulate you on the victory day. It is great happiness for all and for everyone of us that we have lived to this long-awaited day. Now you can start thinking about the future, about our meeting. I would very much like to visit you, to look at you, my dears. How long, however, we have not seen each other! It seems it's been forever. The nightmare is over. Unfortunately, it was not a dream. Our losses are great, not to mention the fact that everyone of us has lost four best years.[38]

May 9, 1945

Dear mommy!

I am writing you on the victory day. In our apartment everybody went mad from joy... Yes, 4 years we have been waiting for this day ... And the soul is sad, too much of it has accumulated during 4 years (3 years 10.5 months). "And any sweetness follows such bitterness that through disdain the taste is lost".[39]

…the new era begins – the postwar one; another step of proud and bloody stairway by which the humanity rises. But this step [is made] on millions of human lives which cannot be forgotten. And the Jews who gave to the world Christ and Marx, for another time generously washed this step with their blood.[40]

May 9, 1945

My beloved ones, dears!

Today is the victory day, but it is as sad as never before. We had a meeting, and I was called to speak. I was afraid that I will cry in public and quickly finished and left. It is hard.

I have not managed to learn details about Zorik. By all means we need to find out where he is buried.

The price of this war was very expensive for us. We have lost the most precious we had, and Rutik (Zorik's sister) remained without his brother. It is somehow easier when I work. Whenever I come to my place, I start longing, yearning. The memories, they are so clear. I cannot believe...[41]

May 28, 1945

My dear all!

Recently we received an inquiry to the commanding officer in which you ask what is with me?

The war is finally over. I do not know what will happen next, but it is nto good so far, I feel emptiness around (…) I will write a detailed letter in about five days.

I kiss you all hard!

Mark[42]

CONCLUSION

Evidences of war crimes, as reflected inwar years' letters, diaries and memoirs are an inalienable addition to archival documents.

War crimes are characterized not only by numerous human casualties, but also by demolished civilian assets, destroyed infrastructure, burned residential areas... However, in people's memory war crimes are primarily associated with mass murders and individual violence, often unmotivated and accompanied by sadism.

Correspondence of 1941-1945 represents an important historical source. We see the war from within, through experiences of the people, psychological anguish, destruction of destinies, manifestations of heroism and human meanness. Academic analysis of items of personal origin is difficult because of its strong emotional background. Researchers dealing with this issue have a feeling of conversations with real people; their voices are heard, there is an immersion into the era under study.

Letters not only wake up emotions, but also cause reflections. They allow to reveal attitudes towards acts of violence committed by civilians and military people, men and women, adults or children of different nationalities. People's memory does not need official statistics; it has its own vision of human tragedy. It provides explanation of war crimes as to the inhuman and immoral phenomenon which does not have a precedent in its scale and brutality.

Testimonies by coevals which took the form of letters differed depending on their authorship. They can be divided into two major parts: descriptive (letters written by civilians – evacuated people, relatives, friends, neighbors and co-workers) and effective (combat army soldiers). The latter had an opportunity to vent the accumulated hatred against the enemy, especially after crossing of the USSR state borders in 1944.

The attitude of Jews towards war crimes was special because they were aware of their fatality in case of defeat. Combat army soldiers of Jewish ethnicity considered themselves personally responsible for fates of their loved ones left behind during the evacuation.

Jews who became victims of the Nazi genocide, were treated by the USSR solely as Soviet citizens or civilians, without specification of nationality. This was done deliberately not to draw parallels between the Nazis' Anti-Semitism of and Anti-Semitism in the USSR.

German Nazism was not capable to fulfill its plans without resorting to war crimes. At the same time, it compromised Germans themselves. In letters we do not find the term "Nazi" that would have been more correct. During the war there was a sign of equality between the words "German" and "fascist" in everyday consciousness, even though this was not true. As we know, fascism has various faces (German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese...). However, for a Soviet person it did not play any difference, since the mechanism of division between "Us" and "Them" was launched. In fact, it was not far from truth, as the Nazis were acting on behalf of all Germans.

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[17] A letter by Efim I. Rosinoer. September 15, 1944. Published in: Znamya, 1988, No. 6, pp. 208-209.

[18] Central Archive of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (Podolsk), f. 33, op. 686196, d. 2081, l. 144.

[19] Piatro F. Hlebka (1905-1969) – Belarusian Soviet poet, playwright, translator, organizer of science.

[20] A letter by M. Shirokova-Klein from Tashkent to A. Kucher in Moscow. March 23, 1942. (Belarusian State Archives-Museum of Literature and Art, f. 446, op. 1, d.232, l. 12-13)

[21] A letter by Samuil Chechik from Sverdlovsk to his sister Rosa to Brooklyn (USA). November 22, 1943. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[22] A letter by Samuil Chechik from Sverdlovsk to Brooklyn (USA). January 26, 1945. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[23] A letter by Meer Tsypin to his nephew Moiz (Mark) Tsypin to Leningrad. January 22, 1944. Id.

[24] Tsypin, V. Evrei v Mstislavle (Jerusalem, 2006), pp. 154-157.

[25] The total number of Jews killed in Mstislavl exceeds 2,000, of whom only 650 names are known.

[26] A letter by lieutenant M. Mirkin to his parents Lazar and Sara Mirkins in Chereya from Kuybyshev. June 29, 1944. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[27] Mirkin, M. From Chereya to Chicago (Jerusalem, 2013), p. 7.

[28] An inquiry by Gelfand about the fates of Yankel Ts. Litvin, Gerusiy Z. Badanin, Svisloch village council, September 14, 1944. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[29] A letter by I.F. Selitsky. July 27, 1944. Archive of the Museum of history and culture of the Belarusian Jews in Minsk. Folder "Holocaust". Borisov district, village of Lisino.

[30] Letters by N.E. Bogatyreva from Vitebsk to A.V.Bogatyrev in Moscow, July 12 and 24, 1944. Belarusian State Archives-Museum of Literature and Art, f. 190, op. 2, d. 273.

[31] A letter by Maria Vaganova to David Pinkhasik. August 25, 1944. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[32] Kupin is a village in Gorodok district of the Khmelnitsky Region (Ukraine). Jewish population: 1351 Jews (96.5%) in 1897, 1089 Jews in 1926. In August 1942 more than 300 Jews of Kupin were shot and burried in the massgrave at the Jewish cemetery.

[33] A letter by Sonya Nisenholz from Gorodok (Kamentes-Podolskiy district, Ukrainian SSR) to Esther Rosenwaser to the village of Almachi (Mozhga district, Udmurt ASSR). April 17, 1945. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[34] Letters by colonel Chaim M. Shkliar to his wife Raisa I. Pasternak. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[35] A letter by David Reichman from combat army to his mother in evacuation in Bukhara. November 2, 1944. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[36] A letter by Moisey Ginsburg from the environs of Berlin to his parents in Baku. February 2 and March 7, 1945.

[37] A letter by Moisey Ginsburg to his parents to Baku. February 5, 1945. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[38] A letter by Vladimir Ryvkin to his relatives. May 9, 1945. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[39] Petrarch, Francesco. Canzoniere. Sonnet 57.

[40] A letter by Lev N. Fontalin from Moscow to his mother E.L. Friedsel who was in the evacuation in Krasnoyarsk. May 9, 1945. Military letters archive at the Diaspora Research Center.

[41] A letter by Yakov A. Epstein from Germany to his wife Nina in Leningrad. May 9, 1945.

[42] A letter by captain Mark Smekhov to his father in Baskiria where the family was evacuated. May 28, 1945.

Author: Dr. *Leonid Smilovitsky*, chief researcher, The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University. Author of the three monographs and more than one hundred publications in the field of history of Belarus and Belarus Jewry.

This text is based on Dr. Smilovitsky's lecture *Nazi Crimes in the Soviet Union as Reflected in Letters, Diaries and Memoirs of Soviet Jews: a Comparative Analysis* delivered at the International conference *East/West European Prosecution of Nazi War Crimes in the Soviet Union: From a Local to a Transnational Perspective* (March 27-29, 2014 in Berlin, Germany). This conference was organized by European Science Foundation, Centre d'études des mondes Russe, Caucasien et Centre-Européen (Paris, France), the Centre Marc Bloch, the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung and the Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg (Germany).

FORUM

DANGEROUS ACTS OR ARTISTIC ANSWER TO REALPOLITIK

LARISA DOROSHENKO

Stable elements are rigid canons often based on fear and obedience. Unstable elements react immediately to the current circumstances without thinking about possible danger. If every element in society was unstable, this hell would not exist. These words of actor Aleh Sidorchyk in the movie *Dangerous Acts Starring the Unstable Elements of Belarus (2013)* refer to the hell called "last dictatorship in Europe", where stability is often portrayed as the ultimate good. Mastery of the director Madeleine Sackler makes this hellish reference even larger, encompassing not only situation in Belarus, but also entire world of real politics where only "sexy" attributes such as oil, gas, land, or diamonds matter and where material assets outweigh universal human values.

This American documentary tells the story of last presidential elections in Belarus, but unlike other films about the same events, it does so through the eyes, souls, and fates of the Belarus Free Theater actors for whom those days became a watershed. Originally Sackler planned to film *Dangerous Acts* inside Belarus, but the crackdown followed after mass demonstrations against voting fraud forced the troupe to escape the country, stretching geography of the movie to the United States and the United Kingdom. The footage filmed in Belarus by a cinematographer who had state accreditation to own a camera and worked in coordination with Sackler has to be smuggled out of the country.

The Belarus Free Theater is a small collective with an original core team of only eight people who dedicated their avant-garde performances to uncomfortable for current regime topics such as alcoholism, sexual orientation, suicide, and politics. Founded in 2005 by human right activist, playwright, and journalist Nikolai Khalezin and his wife and theater producer Natalia Koliada, the theater still illegally operates at a small private house in Minsk with re-occurring raids of KGB and police during their shows.

Time of the narrative is divided on "before" and "after" presidential elections, with the story ending about a year after the Election Day when "the gulp of freedom" in Belarus seems to dissipate completely. This time repressions against opposition leaders and protestors ensued after elections were more severe than ever and many people had to flee the country after being released from prisons. Founders of the theater along with the actor Aleh Sidorchyk were not an exception and had to seek political asylum in Britain, thus making conversations about and with family members the most emotionally touching part of the documentary. In the country where every "good bye" can turn into a farewell, where parents ask their children not to come back, and every return home is associated with letters K-G-B, even words of consolation to all those in exile sound the same: "everything is good, we are home, do not cry".

Belarus Free Theater's play "Minsk, 2011" is an embodiment of this "after" time and the climax of this play involving black ink, a roll of paper and a nude is fully shown in the documentary. Alluding to process of finger-printing, the scene also reveals the unsettling truth: Belarus does not have natural resources, is flat and not sexy, so the only opportunity to attract attention to it is to undress or initiate a mass murder. But it seems that people and politicians got already accustomed to naked bodies, numerous "causalities", and prefer not to notice "annoying" actors either collecting signatures for release of then imprisoned ex-candidate Andrei Sannikov or rallying to support political prisoners in Belarus. In the meantime, the girl in the play as well as entire country is growing into a fully-fledged sadomasochist who enjoys hurting herself and her own people.

Undressing has actually spread from neighboring Ukraine where women's movement "Femen" started organizing flash-mobs by writing political slogans on their topless bodies. After all, as one of the passers-by says in the streets of London talking about rule of law, "Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine – it is all the same." And recent events in the region only emphasize the prophetic message of *Dangerous Acts*: we as a world community, as entire humanity, should not need naked bodies, mass murders, or annexation of "sexy" regions with sea or natural resources to start prioritizing human life, freedom, and basic rights over gas, oil, or diamonds. And the mission of Belarus Free Theater according to Aleh Sidorchyk is exactly to unravel this truth; otherwise there is no chance to restore something that we have almost lost – human dignity.

Note: *Dangerous Acts* is released in UK cinemas on 27 March 2014. The US premier happened at Ashland Independent Film Festival and at Wisconsin Film Festival on 4 April 2014.

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In my opinion, the most glaring illustration of what is happening in our country is the so-called "Stalin Line," with its falsified treatment of events of the Great Patriotic War. Unfortunately, the "Stalin Line" permeates the entire state ideology, although not as openly as before. And I am worried about the future of our country. I do believe that any people can realize itself to its fullest only as a nation state. Only within the borders of their own nation state can the people obtain all opportunities to realize their talents, show their distinctiveness, and secure a worthy life for themselves.

Hienadź Buraŭkin

June 13, 2013, Belarusian Review

NATION AND FREEDOM

PIOTRA MURZIONAK

Who is to blame of global moral crisis, injustice, poverty, wars, violations of rights and freedoms - liberal democrats, ideas of multi-polar world, imperial ambitions, religion, double standards? It is obvious that humanity has lost the common goals and violates the principles and criteria for the achievement of these goals. Instead of a new round of the Cold War and real wars, the signs of which are becoming more visible, mankind would have to agree on new principles of existence and cooperation to establish peace and order in the world, on important joint actions against poverty, diseases and natural disasters.

Double standards that stronger nations apply to small nations show disregard for the principles of democracy, justice and goodness. For the sake of economic gain superpowers trade by people's fate seeking freedom. A striking example of such double standards is the modern conflict in Europe caused by the desire of Ukraine to obtain the status of association with the EU. Russian military aggression against Ukraine showed disrespect for international laws and infringes on the freedom, sovereignty and territory of independent, recently brotherly country. One of the reasons for Russia's aggression is its traditional movement to the west, based on the Eurasian ideology that threatens the existence of not only democracy and freedom, but also nations. Russian aggression confirmed almost 800-year-old division between two civilizations - the Eurasian (Russian) and Eastern Slavic Belarusian-Ukrainian. Of those countries that guarantee the security and sovereignty of Ukraine (Russia, U.S., UK), Russia violated international agreement while the United States and Great Britain were bankrupt because they could not deliver on their responsibilities. Thus, even in our time a national freedom might be threatened by means of weapons. Chechnya, Georgia, and Ukraine – what is next and when?

It seems that the role of nations or nation-states will not decrease, despite the trend towards supranational entities (European Union, Customs Union, and other unions). Events that happened in Yugoslavia and those are now taking place in Ukraine (November 2013 - March 2014) show that the process of nation-building continues even in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. There is a belief that in the future a nation-building in Belarus and in other post-Soviet countries (Kazakhstan, Latvia) will also be completed. To a large extent this will depend on the balance of positive and negative factors which may affect the strengthening of national freedom. Among the strongest positive influence factors are the possibility of modern nation-building and the activities of national elite, among the negative ones - low level of political culture, non-supporting of Belarusian language by the government, the threat of possible aggression, religion. Belarusians intolerance towards people of other races, religions, behavior belongs to negative influence factors as well. It would seemed that the absence of European mentality in that sense is a good sign for a healthy nationalism, since nationalism-patriotism in such a situation could have an advantage over global processes, however, a disrespect for freedom of some categories of people could not contribute to the strengthening of national freedom. Attitude of Belarusians to freedom characterized by uncertainty due to the lack of political culture and traditions of Russian and Soviet legacy; public support for the ideas of democracy is combined with a positive attitude to an authoritarian management style.

Only aware of the presence of civil liberties and using political freedoms a person can grasp the significance of national freedom. We can assume that there is a hierarchy of freedoms (individual - political - national); basic freedoms are individual freedoms and rights. Substitution of civil liberties by human socio-economic rights, along with a lack of political culture and traditions interrupts the achievement of nation freedom, as it leads to the loss of national pride and an unwillingness to maintain the old history and culture and to a nihilistic attitude toward their nation and its freedom. Level of political rights and freedoms and national freedom is the level of the active work of the national elites. However, the conditions for such work in Belarus are unfavorable.

The balance of positive and negative forces in Belarus, according to our five-point scale calculations, directed to the negative part. The key factors that can change the balance towards positive direction are primarily internal factors, namely the understanding of the importance of strengthening of national freedom by population, entrepreneurs, and the state leadership. Among the strongest negative factor that would need to be reduced or eliminated, is the threat of occupation, however, with the understanding that "awakens" among Western democracies, it is a hope, that the negative influence of this factor can be removed in favor of small peoples and nations. Together with the increased role of other positive factors that would significantly change the motion of the Belarusians to the national freedom.

Note : the whole article in Belarusian has been published in magazine "SAKAVIK" www.sakavik.net March 2014, issue 5, pp. 14-37.

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It is very important for us to find something in our past to connect us with the present. We have no intention of forgetting our origin, therefore, we pay close attention to such objects. Moreover, they contribute to our stronger statehood and once again prove that Belarus is an ancient land, that various states have existed here, that the land has seen various fates. But today's Belarus is a self-relying independent country, with the roots going deep into the past.

Aliaksandr Lukashenka

April 18, 2014, BelTA

NEW BOOKS

THE EXPERIENCE OF IMPRISONMENT BECAME NECESSARY FOR THE READERS

VALANCINA TRYHUBOVIČ

This statement is from the introduction to the book "Voice of Freedom From Behind the Grates", which was recently published in Vilnia. The anthology of works by Belarusian political prisoners, is 990 pages of poems, remembrances, events, accounts, and published articles of 18 authors. The editor, himself recently imprisoned for political reasons, Alaksandar Fiaduta, in his writings remembers many people in current Belarusian history who were incarcerated for their beliefs. He starts his reports with one from Slavamir Adamovič, who in 1996 was incarcerated in the KGB prison for his poem "Kill the President".

Among the authors in the anthology (all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience as declared by international human rights organizations) are people of many different political outlooks and of varying ages. The one thing they all have in common is their love of freedom and democracy, and the fact that they all have been convicted on fabricated charges.

An excerpt from Ihar Alinievič's work "Going to Magadan"/"On the Way to Magadan", which we are reprinting with the gracious permission of the author's mother Valancina Michajlaŭna, gives insightful answers to questions which bother many currently in Belarus. The documentary story, often referred to as a prison diary, has a sympathetic protagonist who is strong in his personal beliefs. It also has elements of a detective story, i.e. his kidnapping in Moscow by "men in black" and his illegal transport to Belarus. The author presents clear psychological portraits of inmates and guards, all with a touch of humor and romance. He is an intellectual, a philosopher, specialist in the radio electronic field, an anarchist by belief, fighter for truth and freedom. The false accusations against him were not proven in court, but still, he received an 8 year sentence of hard labor.

In December 2013, Ihar Alinievič became the first laureate of "Francišak Alachnovič Award", sponsored by the RFE/RL and the Belarusian PEN center. The award is in honor of Francišak Alachnovič who published the world's first book about Stalin's purges "In the Claws of the GPU", as written by the victim.

Sadly for the Belarusian people, this is not history, but today's state of affairs in Belarus.

ON THE WAY TO MAGADAN

IHAR ALINIEVIČ

EXERPT

THE CORPORATION

Belarus is a family-run corporation with an annual income of a few dozen billion dollars (to compare: the annual income of Intel is 15 billions a year, Apple — 45 billion). The head of the corporation is a board of directors that consists of ministers and heads of the Cabinet. They are

not the bosses, just the top managers. Any of them could become nobody tomorrow. The true boss is the only boss — the Family. The middle-ranking corporate management (the level of project executives) consists of about 1,000 people. These are the people who have at least some significant power concentrated in their hands. The lower level is the executive staff — those who implement the corporate policies locally. The corporation apparatus has about 90,000 functionaries[1] in total. This is the ruling class of the country.

The mechanism is designed to perform the two most important tasks of the corporation:

1. Accounting, control, collection of taxes from all economic activities in the country;

2. Providing corporate safety and social oppression.

The most profitable sectors of the corporation are the processing and sale of Russian oil and petroleum products, potash fertilizers, machinery, meat and dairy products and products of the chemical industry. 80% of all property is owned by the state leaving 20% which is owned by private individuals. Private business is more efficient than state-owned enterprises, but the Family stifles it's growth in every way. In the first place, state-owned enterprises are easier to rob. The biggest chunks go personally to the Family. Secondly, it is in the interests of the apparatus. The managerial staff are willing to receive their share of revenue together with corporate perks and privileges in exchange for their loyalty. Legal and illegal embezzlement, kickbacks, subcontracting, nepotism, etc. are widespread. Embezzlement schemes are honed to perfection.

The Family has to put up with it. Third, though privatization promises instant benefits, it leads to an increase in the number of the bourgeoisie, i. e. private legal entities and individual entrepreneurs. The danger is that the bourgeoisie does not want (by nature) to share with anyone else, and hence necessarily wants to throw off the yoke of the Family Corporation. Being large, possessing abilities, will and means, the bourgeoisie seeks to unite with liberal political movements (the opposition) and/or part of the corporate machine. The goal is to overthrow the Family and establish a collegial managerial body controlling the apparatus, i. e. parliament. The Family can not eliminate the private sector completely, because business is the workhorse which plugs the gaps of the economy. At the very bottom, under the corporate machine and indu-

strial entities, there is a population, called Belarusians. They have absolutely nothing, because mainly they depend on the budget and state enterprises. The population is the eternal headache for the Corporation, because it requires provision in the form of salaries, exemptions, medicine, transport, education and leisure. The problems begin when the masses show discontent. Generally speaking, the discontent and unrest of the population itself is not dangerous for the Corporation. They can easily be suppressed by the security forces. The Ministry of Internal Affairs alone has 14.5 employees per 1,000 of the population. However, discontent can give advantage to the bourgeoisie and the liberal political forces. That is why the Family stifles any manifestation of civil society, prevents the formation of sustainable liberal forces, secretly punishing activists from the opposition and bourgeoisie (for example, expulsions and layoffs, business verifications, etc.).

The unrest of the population is a permanent thing. The logic is as follows: dissatisfaction – unrest – strikes – riot – revolution. The Corporation's biggest fear is not the liberal influence on the masses, but the disappointment of the masses in any power at all. If people understand that everything was created by them, that without ordinary working people the chiefs become nothing, if people feel their strength — at that moment the population is transformed into a nation. The people is the society that is aware of itself, its rights and interests. And that is the end of any authority!

All politicians at all times look warily at the "people's card" in their games. The reverse side of the card is the social revolution. And it is impossible to tame it by anything but the most severe terror. Bonapartists encountered it during the French Revolution, and the Bolsheviks faced it too. No wonder Lenin and Trotsky said that popular uprisings were more dangerous for them than all the White armies combined! This is why the Corporation does everything for the population to remain indifferent to politics. That's why the second function of the Corporation is its own security and social oppression. There are special institutions in the Corporation that monitor, on the most modern scientific basis, the possible impact of economic fluctuations on the mood of the masses. By effectively manipulating the figures in the field of social policy, the Corporation manages to provide relative indifference year by year. One of those mechanisms is the Committee of State Control, which receives specific instructions from above. But these are details.

In general, the system of social oppression imposes on people:

1. values of conformity, when people are afraid and ashamed of thinking differently from others;

2. values of consumerism, where personal growth is tied to the level of material goods used by the person;

3. values of national patriotism, when, through amplification of collective feeling, they force you to love the Corporation's symbols and feel unity with it, identify yourself with the ruling class and consider the population of other countries overt and covert enemies.

Social oppression involves the artificial maintenance of a permanent deficit (that it is barely enough) and a sense of internal and external threat to distract people from understanding the real problems and the causes of these problems. In addition to the imposing of destructive values and the daily brainwashing and lies through the media, the Corporation is actively pursuing a policy of alcoholism and drug addiction among the population. The first thing is legal, with the Corporation holding the monopoly on the sale of alcohol and tobacco. The second one is illegal, through the protection of laboratories, supply chains and dealer networks (yes, it is really like this!). This simultaneously brings in a lot of money and is a profitable social tool.

Ideally, the family would like to have:

1. An absolutely loyal and unfailing corporate machine;

2. An uncomplaining bourgeoisie, always ready to be shorn;

3. Formal, almost dead opposition, just a sign board for the "civilized" world;

4. Obedient livestock instead of people, always remaining in the state of degradation.

People are consumable material for the Corporation. There will always be an inevitable number of unscrupulous social climbers, who are ready to climb up and replenish the ruling class via the necessary education and rejection of conscience. Let the others degrade, emigrate…

Despite the monkey business of social manipulation, the cultural sanitization and the association with state-owned enterprises, the key instrument of social oppression still remains the punitive system, which includes operational reconnaissance, investigation, prosecutor's offices, courts and "correctional" institutions. I went into details about the judicial-investigative mechanism in my diary.

Its logic needs more and more cases to provide continuous operation. The penitentiary system produces at least 45% of recidivism. Obviously it reproduces crime to provide for its existence. Our fates are the fuel for punitive agencies. My statements only explain the principles of operation and self-maintenance of this mechanism.

But what is oppression, what social effect does it have? One would think, the agencies take advantage of the "fast circulation": from a citizen to a prisoner and again, and again, it means it should be profitable to jail recidivists for short periods, so that they could escape soon and commit a new crime, and then a new case would be filed and farther along the trodden path… Indeed, professional criminals or those who choose a criminal way of life, as well as mere idiots, keep to a relatively mild punishment. At the same time a huge number of people whose offenses are not connected with criminality get huge sentences, and it's impossible to understand it in the frames of the penal system. Why? The answer becomes clear when you put together the picture of the Corporation's social policy and the picture of psychological types of the so-called 'grave offenders' (from 3–6 years of imprisonment and more, up to 20–25 years). Mostly (and it is evident to anyone), these people are more active, initiative-taking, clever, original and, what is more important, more principled than the average inhabitant. Only professionals get really short sentences (but

they are caught very seldom) or — the majority of this category — mental cripples, drunkards, the demoralized, simpletons, trapped because of stupidity or by mistake. In other words, 'the grave' are the people capable of action, of risk, they are aware of their worth and are ready to fight for a better lot and respect, at least for themselves. They are the movers and shakers of society, who could occupy a prominent place in this society.

Selectively stifling conscious citizens, potential bourgeoisie, social activists, politicians and labor leaders is a troublesome and unreliable process. Much more effective for a social oppression strategy is the stifling of active forces in society in general, on a massive scale. It is achieved through micro outtakes (the conviction of a person for a long time on the grounds of a specious excuse) of active, in a broad sense, individuals. It involves corruption, financial misappropriation, participation in organized criminal groups and murders. These active individuals are potentially dangerous for the Corporation because they have stronger intellectual and volitional qualities. Through long-term isolation in prison a person falls out of life and will hardly be able to achieve anything: this person will fall to pieces, will emigrate, will sap health. There is a term, "suppression of intellectuals", which means the genocide of the people. I mean it, but understand it in a broader sense: the suppression of active forces in society in general.

Now consider the large-scale implementation of this method. There were more than half a million people jailed over 20 years! Overall 1.2 million people at least, mainly male, were subject to the penitentiary system including those on custodial restraint, penal settlements, etc.

This is equivalent to 60–70 thousand prisoners per year. And this is considering a total of 2–2.5 million able-bodied males in the country! Thus every second man faced the system and every fifth one (20%) went through prisons. Nazis thought that the nation degrades when 15% of the population of reproductive age is eliminated. During the subjection of Don Cossack rebels, Trotsky offered to eliminate the same percent of the adult male population. Could there be any other interpretation of such a "coincidence"? Or the Corporation doesn't know what it's doing? They all perfectly understand it because they will do anything for the retention of power!

There is a lot of bad talk about Belarusians. But what can we do when we are jailed over and over again? We can see the results of these micro-outtakes that took place over 20 years: the development of society has stopped, culture is poor, there is a low morality, blurring ethics, total indifference, lack of resistance to authority. There you have it — moral genocide. But loosen the grip for a little bit and you'll see the spirit rise.

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[1] Ihar uses the term 'funtionaries'; an often negative, formal term for people who work for The Party during the Soviet period

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U.S.A. : BELARUSIAN REVIEW
PO Box 9268 Trenton, NJ 08650
E-mail: belarusianreview@hotmail.com
Tel: (001) 609 424 3126

Europe : BELARUSIAN REVIEW
Malesicka ul. 553/65
108 00 Praha 10, Czech Republic
E-mail: thepointjournal@gmail.com
Tel: (420) 274 771 338, (420) 774 613 356

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